



Pathways

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

December 17, 2017

Volume 9, Number 16

Upcoming Dates

- December 18 – (7:00 p.m.)
School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- December 20 – (7:00 p.m.)
RMHS Band Winter Concert in the Endslo PAC; (sundown)
Hanukkah Ends
- December 22 – Winter Break Begins at the End of the School Day
- December 25 – Merry Christmas
- December 26 – Happy Kwanzaa
- January 1 – Happy New Year
- January 2 – Welcome Back
- January 4 – (7:00 p.m.)
Reading SEPAC Meeting in the RMHS Schettini Library
- January 5 – (7:00 p.m.)
RMHS Drama – Improvosaurus in the Endslo PAC

Inspirational Holiday Story About Teachers

Teachers make a difference each and every day in the lives of students. In the past, this newsletter has posted stories about the impact that teachers can make. The story below, originally written in Home Life Magazine by Elizabeth Silance Ballard in 1976, may be familiar to many of you, but the message is still powerful. In the story, Mrs. Thompson exemplifies the type of leadership we should all take notice of and the impact a person can have on someone's life. She helped this little boy, Teddy, feel like he was important and changed his life.

Thank you for what you do each and every day for our students. On behalf of the Reading Public Schools, we hope that you have a happy and healthy holiday season!

Mrs. Thompson was a fifth grade teacher at an elementary school in rural New York. On the very first day of school, she noticed in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant. Teddy struggled in school and was not doing well, getting F's on several tests.

Mrs. Thompson was very concerned and reviewed Teddy's records to see if there was any history that would give her a clue as to what was wrong. What she reviewed, surprised her.

Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, 'Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners... he is a joy to be around..'

His second grade teacher wrote, 'Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle.'

His third grade teacher wrote, 'His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest, and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken.'

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, 'Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class.'

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself that she had not done something sooner... She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, 'Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to.'

After the children left, she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class.

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer.... The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulation to the Parker and RMHS Choral Department students and staff for outstanding performances at the annual winter concerts.
- Kudos to the following Fall Globe All-Scholastics – RMHS Swim 200 yd. Medley Relay (Molly Jones, Anna Roberts, Jillian Rhodes and Alana Loughman) and the 200 yd. Freestyle Relay (Kayla Loughman, Anna Roberts, Maura Letendre and Alana Loughman)
- Congratulations to the boys hockey team and girls basketball team for opening the season with a win.

They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, 'Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference.'

Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, 'Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you.'

The Five Habits of Extreme Learners

We must empower students to take control of their own learning

By Milton Chen for *Education Week Blog*

December 11, 2017

Over the past decade, the most prominent school reform effort has been the development of the Common Core State Standards and their assessments, which were intended to support college and career readiness. However, during that same period, the world of work took a sharp, driverless turn. Start-ups with odd names like Uber and Lyft swiftly accelerated, upending urban transportation, creating millions of new jobs and eliminating others.

Armies of robots, already in factories and warehouses, are preparing to march into offices and hospitals. With artificial intelligence increasingly competing with human intelligence, what's a student to do? And how might educators help them? If these prospects sound dark, perhaps we can light a path forward by studying young people who are already preparing themselves well for this uncertain future.

In 2014, as a fellow at the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, Calif., I worked on a simple project to interview a small, diverse collection of individuals we called "extreme learners." They met a single criterion: They loved to learn. Like extreme athletes, they were passionate and fearless. Instead of letting institutions define what and how they learned, they engineered their own personal ecosystems of learning and connected their learning to earning in creative ways.

The 11 extreme learners we identified were mostly in their teens and 20s and included a few mid-career and experienced professionals. As John Falk, an expert on informal learning at Oregon State University and one of our extreme learners, put it, "Everyone on this planet is hard-wired to learn, extremely, all the time. The first advice I give to any learner today is: You must take control over your own learning. The good news is, it's easier today than it's ever been."

As a group, our extreme learners did not fit conventional definitions of "best and brightest," as defined by high GPAs or test scores. Instead, they were opportunistic in finding places and people to learn with, using not only formal schooling but also informal learning centers, such as maker spaces and science centers. They engaged in authentic, experiential, project-based learning.

These extreme learners shared five habits, which can prove instructive as we look to prepare students for an unpredictable future:

- 1.) They were self-motivated and found connections between their learning and working, both volunteer and paid. Sixteen-year-old Thomas Hunt, for example, left high school after 9th grade and created his own home school, volunteering at an anti-aging center concerned with macular degeneration and atherosclerosis while taking community college classes. Another extreme

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

12/20 Joshua Eaton
(12:30 – 1:30 p.m.)

learner, Lenore Edman turned her interests in paper crafts, sewing, and electronics into an online business.

- 2.) They maintained a strong sense of curiosity across disciplines, often spanning the arts and the sciences. They asked a lot of questions and volunteered for new experiences. Mollie Cueva-Dabkoski tried several high schools before settling on the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts in San Francisco, where she pursued her interests in Afro-Brazilian dance and creative writing. At the same time, she also worked on a research study with an entomologist at the California Academy of Sciences, studying beetles and biodiversity in the high altitudes of China's Yunnan Province. These learners are the type of students prized by many universities and companies: Students interested in a wide range of topics, and deeply knowledgeable in a few topics.
- 3.) They were networkers. They cultivated role models and mentors through face-to-face and online connections and participated in communities of like-minded individuals. Parents often supported their explorations. As a high school student, New Yorker Nikhil Goyal contacted a global network of mentors through email and Twitter, asking them to advise him on new models of learning. While still in high school, he wrote a book, *One Size Does Not Fit All*, and became an in-demand keynote speaker at education conferences.
- 4.) They were technology savants, accessing a vast world of online learning for resources, contacts, courses, platforms, and tools. They were digital producers as well as consumers, sharpening their coding and design skills to create websites, apps, and virtual-reality games. Reflecting on his 16 years of schooling spent "feeding facts into his forgetting machine," Nick Winter studied learning theories and created an app for learning Chinese characters. Preetha Ram, a former dean at Emory University, designed a social learning platform where learners pose questions, receive help, and, in turn, help others.
- 5.) They developed their social-emotional skills, learning to work well in groups and taking on leadership and teaching roles. Faced with challenging personal circumstances, they became more resilient. With a background in computers, Marc Roth moved to San Francisco, but became ill and homeless for six months. At a maker studio space, he took courses, starting with 3-D printing. In turn, he taught others and developed his own three-month program to teach digital fabrication to the homeless, which was praised by then-President Barack Obama at the White House Maker Faire.

These extreme learners had an entrepreneurial spirit. While they may take on jobs in established companies, they will also do well in the "gig economy," where self-starters fill in periods of underemployment. They developed that spirit as entrepreneurs of their own learning, seeking out projects, identifying supporters, and applying lessons from one experience to the next.

While today's students will ride in driverless cars, they should begin now to take the steering wheel of their learning lives. The sooner schools and informal learning centers give them more freedom and flexibility to do so, the better their chances for thriving in careers we cannot now imagine.

Milton Chen is chairman of the Panasonic Foundation in Newark, N.J. He is a senior fellow at The George Lucas Educational Foundation (edutopia.org) and contributed to the Institute for the Futures' Work + Learn Futures program.

Quote of the Week . . .



“People inspire you or they drain you...pick them wisely.”

- Hans F. Hansen

Five Principles of Outstanding Classroom Management

When we asked our community for their best classroom management practices, over 700 ideas rolled in.

By **Samer Rabadi**, **Betty Ray** for **Edutopia Blog**

Effective classroom management requires awareness, patience, good timing, boundaries, and instinct. There’s nothing easy about shepherding a large group of easily distractible young people with different skills and temperaments along a meaningful learning journey.

So how do master teachers do it?

To get a deeper understanding of experienced teachers’ go-to classroom management strategies, we took an informal poll on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Unsurprisingly, there is no silver bullet for classroom management success. That said, as we pored over the more than 700 responses, we did see some clear trends. Here are the most often cited and creative approaches.

1. Take Care of Yourself to Take Care of Your Students

As the airline safety videos say: Put on your own oxygen mask first.

To learn effectively, your students need a healthy you, said our experienced teachers. So get enough sleep, eat healthy food, and take steps to attend to your own well-being. In her first year of teaching, Jessica Sachs “was working 15-hour days and was completely stressed out. My husband finally said to me, ‘The most important thing that you do at school is make decisions. If you are too tired to do that properly, it won’t matter how well-prepared you were the night before.’” A few deep breaths can go a long way to helping you identify frustration before you act on it. Mindy Jones, a middle school teacher from Brownsville, Tennessee, notes that “a moment of patience in a moment of frustration saves you a hundred moments of regret.”

Countless studies corroborate the idea that self-care reduces stress, which can deplete your energy and impair your judgment. While self-care is more of a habit or practice for your own well-being than an actual classroom management strategy, the benefits include improved executive function, greater empathy, and increased resilience—all qualities that will empower you to make better decisions when confronted with challenging classroom situations.

2. Focus on Building Relationships

This was the theme we heard the most: Building healthy student-teacher relationships is essential to a thriving classroom culture, and even sets the stage for academic success. The phrase “build relationships” occurred 27 times during the Facebook and Instagram discussions, and other variants of that wording appeared 78 times.

“Rapport is huge!” confirmed middle school teacher Kim Manzer, before adding that she always makes the time to talk to students as a whole class or one on one. Simple efforts like greeting kids outside the classroom before the start of the day pay outsized dividends. “They appreciate it so much when I just stop to listen and take interest.” Teacher Amanda Tait from Prince George, British Columbia, adds a little spice to the ritual: “I always meet them at the door and we do a ‘high-five, chicken-five,’ touching elbows with a ‘wing.’”

Disney Tweet of the Week



"It's better to use your head than break your back."

-- Ernst Robinson (Swiss Family Robinson)

Yes! We high-five, chicken-five in agreement.

Many educators noted that a teacher's ability to balance warmth and strong boundaries is key to successful relationships—and classroom management. "Be consistent but flexible. Love them unconditionally, but hold them accountable. Give them voice but be the leader," said Rae Rudzinski.

3. Set Rules, Boundaries, and Expectations (and Do It Early)

Students don't thrive amid chaos. They need some basic structure—and consistency—to feel safe and to focus.

But maintaining a culture of mutual respect doesn't mean your goal is to "make pals," noted middle school reading coach Heather Henderson. "You can't be their friend. You can be kind, loving, and supportive, but you still have to be their teacher." Establish the code of conduct early in the year, and be sure that everyone—including the teacher—makes an effort to stay true to it. Predictability counts: "Follow through with rewards and consequences. If you say it, mean it. And if you mean it, say it. Be clear, be proactive, and be consistent," said Lori Sheffield.

There was broad consensus among educators that modeling appropriate classroom behavior sets the tone for children: "You make the weather," said Diana Fliginger from Minot, North Dakota. "Your attitude as the teacher really determines what the tone and environment of your classroom is like. If you want calm and productive, project that to your kids." Many others cautioned that while enforcing rules consistently is critical, it's important to pick your battles too—especially if those confrontations are going to be public: "Instead, say, 'You and I will talk about this later,'" advises Denise Tremblay Drapeau. "That way you can still address the issue while saving face. It completely changed the vibe in my classroom."

4. Take a Strength-Based Approach

In a long back-and-forth about classroom management practices, it might have been the most memorable quote: "Find ways to make your hardest kid your favorite kid," said Karen Yenofsky, turning a nearly perfect phrase and triggering an avalanche of teacher love. "When you connect with them... it makes everything smoother."

That's not easy, of course. A strength-based lens means never forgetting to look beneath the surface of behavior, even when it's inconvenient. "Find the root of the problem," urged teacher Judi Michalik of Bangor, Maine. "I have never met a student that doesn't want to be successful. If they are misbehaving it is kind of like when a baby cries; there is something wrong in their world. If they are misbehaving for attention then find out why they need the attention and how you can give them what they need."

And don't forget to continue to work to deepen the connection, being mindful of the context and using language thoughtfully. "Don't sound surprised when remarking on struggling students' successes," said Jenni Park, a teacher from Asheville, North Carolina. "Instead of saying, 'Wow! That was amazing,' it's better to say, 'I'm proud of you, but not surprised. I always knew you could do it.'"

Finally, cultural differences can also play an unconscious role in our expectations of whether a student will succeed, so it's important to reflect on any stereotypes that come up for you. "Don't look at a single one of your kids as if they are deficit and in need of

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?



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/>

‘guidance’ to become better,” says elementary educator Elijah Moore, drawing over 230 positive reactions. “Cultural difference does not equal cultural deficiency.”

5. Involve Parents and Guardians

“Never forget that every student is someone’s child,” writes Molly Francis, echoing many teachers in our thread. “Parents/guardians/caregivers want to hear that you see the good in their child. A positive connection with home can often help in the classroom.”

The popular apps Remind and ClassDojo were frequently praised, and appear to be well on the way to replacing phone calls—both from teachers to guardians, and in the other direction, too. “Let’s be honest,” wrote middle school teacher Kristin Ward. “If some parents had my personal cell number they would be calling all the time!”

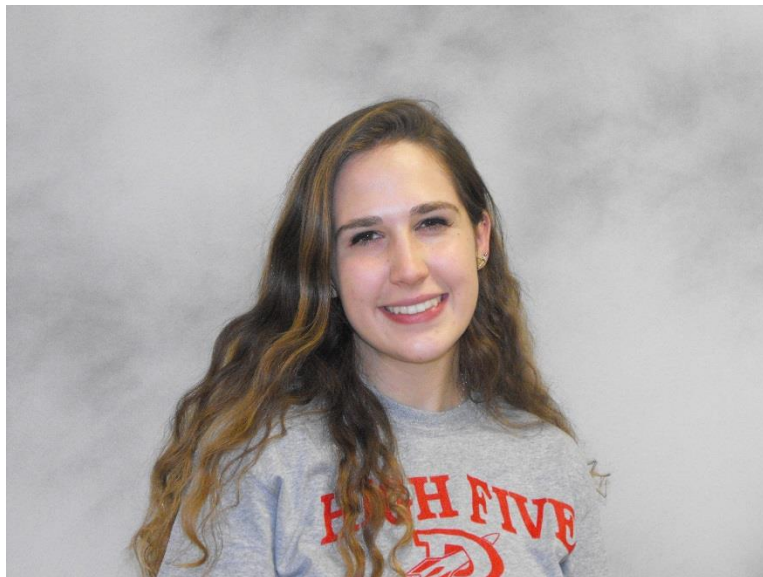
The majority of teachers send home reports of both positive and negative behaviors—it’s critical to do the former, too—and also use email and text services to communicate about upcoming events, due dates, and student progress. “Catch them doing good and call their parents to let them know you noticed,” suggests Barbara Rawson. And Kim Manzer (she’s so nice we quoted her twice) reminds fellow teachers that the benefits of parental communication find their way back to the classroom: “It’s important that parents are involved and know what’s going on so they can support and reinforce at home.”

Reading Public Schools Happenings

RMHS High Fives for This Week

Below are the RMHS High Fives for this week.

Emily Cain, Class of 2018



Emily is being recognized for her outstanding accomplishments in scholarship, activities, leadership and service. Academically, Emily is challenging herself by taking two AP classes in European History and Spanish. She has been an Honor Student for all 4 years here at RMHS and has particularly enjoyed the reading, writing, and discussions of her Honors English coursework. Last year, she was honored with a Core Value Award for Respect—exemplifying kindness and thoughtfulness towards everyone she encounters. In her sophomore year, Emily also earned a Perseverance Core Value Award

for her work in Mixed Choir. She has particularly enjoyed her coursework this year in Anatomy and Physiology. In terms of activities, Emily has been a very active four-year member of the Drama Club. Her upcoming performance as Mrs. Chauvenet in the spring production of *Harvey* will be her *tenth* drama production. Some of the other memorable roles that Emily has enjoyed performing are “the Doll” in *Mary Poppins* and “Donatella” in *The Wedding Singer*. She has also helped behind the scenes in several productions, working as a member of the Hair Crew for the production of *Antigone* and *Around the World in 80 Days*. Emily has also assumed a variety of leadership roles in her work with Drama, including being the sophomore and senior representative of the Club—helping to stay in touch with the Club members and to provide ongoing, key communication as necessary. She has also been a member of The Five Star Theatre Company production crew since her sophomore year, helping younger artists to develop the stage skills needed to perform. Emily’s accomplishments as a performer also include ten years as a pianist and four years performing in all three RMHS Voice groups—Fermata Nowhere, Mixed Choir, and RMHS Singers. This year, she is the President of RMHS Singers and the Vice President of Mixed Choir and was a historian for both groups last year. Of course, we can’t forget Emily’s contribution as one of the three student voices of RMHS responsible for the always entertaining morning announcements! Lastly, Emily even finds time in her busy schedule to volunteer at Winchester Hospital, where she works as a junior messenger responsible for transporting patients and delivering a variety of things including flowers! She also has contributed regularly to the Reading Chronicle by writing the Senior Profiles and as a lay reader at the First Congregational Church in Reading. Finally, in her work as an officer in the Drama Club, Emily is responsible for coordinating and participating in a variety of community service projects that help to make Reading such a great place! Next year, Emily will be attending a four-year college and pursuing a health science major.

Adam Clark, Class of 2018



Adam is being recognized for his excellence in academics, activities, and service. Academically, Adam challenges himself by taking Honors Psychology and Honors Creative Writing. In his sophomore year, Adam was awarded a Core Value Award for Perseverance in French, and he has continued to give his very best throughout his years at RMHS. In terms of activities, Adam has excelled as a 4-year member of the Drama Club—as a member of the dedicated Technical Crew. Most recently, he helped create the “theatrical magic” in the fall production of *Pippin*, where as a member of the run crew, he was responsible for ensuring smooth transitions in moving and fixing set pieces throughout the performance. Adam has also been a four-year member of the Science

Team, and recently helped the Rockets to earn an outstanding 5th place finish, beating out 50 other schools in the “Towers” competition, which had teams engineer a model tower—having to adhere to certain rigorous standards for height, weight, and strength. Adam has also been a four-year member of the Environmental Club, helping to inspire members of the RMHS and Reading community to be mindful of reducing waste and increasing recycling on a regular basis. He has assisted in the development of environmental related ideas for the community and is currently exploring ways to create a compost pile that will address the daily production of biodegradable waste in the RMHS cafeteria. Adam has also been a four-year member of the spring outdoor track team, competing in the 110 meter and hurdles events and is looking forward to another exciting season in 2018. He is also an active member of the Boy Scouts, most recently earning the distinguished status of Eagle Scout. In order to reach this significant accomplishment, Adam had to complete a rigorous service project, which was to oversee the construction of a series of bat houses designed to maintain bat populations, which help to reduce mosquitoes and other harmful insects. As a member of the Scouts, Adam has exemplified a commitment to service, completing hundreds of community service hours in the local Reading community. Other notable community service projects include the ongoing construction and restoration of bridges and walkways in Reading Town Forests and the installation and construction of gardens for local Reading churches. Next year, Adam will be attending a 4-year college and will be pursuing a degree in Environmental Science. Congratulations, Adam!

Parker Student Leaders Bring Holiday Cheer

On Thursday, the Parker Leaders brought holiday cheer to the residents of Tannerville. They played games, cards, arts and crafts, and enjoyed each other’s company and conversation. A special thanks to the advisors, Kim Peterson and Jessica Carven for helping to make this event possible.



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

Dr. Anna Ornstein Visits Parker and Coolidge

On Friday, Holocaust Survivor Dr. Anna Ornstein spoke to full assemblies of students at Parker and Coolidge about her story and what it means today. Below are some pictures from this inspirational event for students. A special thanks goes out to Linda Snow Dockser for coordinating the event.



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go out to Birch Meadow Special Education Paraeducator **Anne Bowen** who lost a loved one recently.
- Our thoughts go out to **Parker Teacher Leah Cristi** who lost a loved one recently.
- Congratulations to Parker teacher **Jessica Dougherty** on the birth of her daughter Lillian Grace on December 14th weighing 9 lbs., 2 oz.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Nancy MacLeod, Daily Substitute, District
 - ✓ Amy Sanchez, Daily Substitute, District
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit
- <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

0.5 FTE Board Certified Behavior Analyst
https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=418
1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Grade 6 ELA Teacher, Coolidge Middle School
https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=419

Blazing Trails...

"Mental Health in Schools." Educating the whole child includes caring for the mental health of students. The December 2017/January 2018 issue of ASCD's Educational Leadership Magazine offers insights for educators on difficult topics like depression, anxiety, addiction and trauma, and how schools can help affected students thrive. [Read More](#)

"Show & Tell: A Video Column / Teachers as Early Warning Detectors." In this ASCD Educational Leadership article by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, they confront a very difficult but relevant subject: teen suicide. Teen suicides are rising. Teachers have a role in halting the trend. "We don't believe teachers have to become counselors, but we believe teachers can be the eyes and ears of the mental health system." [Read More](#)

"Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy (LILA)." ASCD's premier education policy conference -- the Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy (LILA) -- will help you build and hone your advocacy skills on the issues you care about. Attendees will learn how to leverage their professional expertise and civic passion into real influence. Join fellow educators in a powerful network of advocates who are getting informed and getting involved to make a difference. Jan. 21-23, Washington, D.C. [Read More](#)

"Tips And Tricks To Keep Kids On Track During Genius Hour Projects."

Genius Hour programs -- in which students spend 20% of their time pursuing a project they are passionate about -- are not on the path of least resistance, but they are worth the extra time and effort, asserts educator Sean Crevier. He shares his own suggestions for such programs in this KQED Mind/Shift article. [Read More](#)

"Making It Relevant: Helping Students Connect Their Studies to the World

Today." Four ideas from the New York Times Learning Network for showing how the themes, issues, questions and ideas students explore in school play out in the news and in our culture. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week, A Great Vacation and a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!