



Pathways

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

May 13, 2018

Volume 4, Number 34

Upcoming Dates

- May 14 – (6:00 p.m.) Grade 5 Instrument Night for Wood End, Barrows & Birch Meadow at Coolidge
- May 15 – (5:30 p.m.) RMHS AP Art Show; – (6:00 p.m.) Grade 5 Instrument Night for Killam and Joshua Eaton at Coolidge; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Spring Awards
- May 17 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral – Spring into Song in the Endslo PAC
- May 18 – Last Day of School for Seniors
- May 21 – 24 – Senior Finals
- May 21 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- May 22 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Scholastic Awards Night
- May 24 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Prom @ Fairmount Copley Plaza
- May 28 – Memorial Day – Schools & Offices Closed
- May 29 – (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Boat Cruise & All-Night Party
- May 30 – (7:00 p.m.) Reading Scholarship Foundation Night in the Endslo PAC
- May 31 – (7:00 p.m.) Baccalaureate Service (Location TBD)
- June 1 – (7:00 a.m.) RMHS Senior Class Day in the Endslo PAC

Reading Students Participate in Special Olympics

38 Students Shine On This Special Day

Last Thursday, 38 Reading Students from Birch Meadow, Wood End, Coolidge, and RMHS participated in the Annual Special Olympics held at Malden High School. Students participated in a variety of events including wheelchair races, assisted races, walks, 50m, 100m, and 200m dash, long jumps, and throws. It was an amazing day for these students.

We would like to thank the following staff who helped make this day possible: from Birch Meadow, Alicia Day, Sue Wilkinson, Katherine Breen, Wina Leahy, and Susan Kiouis. From Wood End, Maggie George, Kelsey Wharff, Kristen Frongillo, and Catherine Bjangard. From Coolidge, Tara Herlihy, Ashley Nagle, Peggy Wass, Krsiten Ford, Megan Haley, and Emily Wagner. From RMHS, Kathy Crowley, Dan McCarron, Deb Ford, and Alysia Redard.



Reading Team

- June 3 – (1:00 p.m.)
Graduation in the Hawkes
Field House



RMHS Student Recognized at Congressional Art Show *Emma Turner wins "best of school"*

Recently, RMHS Senior Emma Turner won "best of school" for her piece called "home invasion" at the 6th Congressional Art Show in Boston. As part of this recognition, Emma was awarded \$500 towards a course at the Montserrat College of Art. Emma is an AP Art Student under the direction of RMHS Art Teacher Sue Gilbert. Congratulations to Emma on such a worthy accomplishment!

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to girls and boys tennis, boys & girls lacrosse, baseball and softball on recent wins.
- Congratulations to the boys tennis team for qualifying for the MIAA post season tournament.
- Congratulations to tennis doubles team Marielle Verrier and Ainsley Cohen for compiling a 10 – 1 record this year.
- Good luck to girls tennis when they compete in the individual tennis tournament this weekend.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Drama Program on a successful spring production of Charlotte's Web.
- To all staff at Birch Meadow, Coolidge, RMHS, Central Office, and Facilities who calmly and professionally enacted a shelter in place emergency after school last Friday.



Emma Turner



Emma's Work "Home Invasion"

Superintendent's Office
Hours this Week

All are welcome

5/17 Superintendent's
Office
4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

5/18 RMHS
7:15 – 8:15 a.m.

Student Services Office
Hour and Classroom
Visits This Week

Monday 5/14 7:30-8:30 in
the Office of Teaching and
Learning

Tuesday 5/15 7:30-9:00
Coolidge-- Office Hours
and Classroom Visits

Using Behavioral Science to “Nudge” Students in the Right Direction

In this interview with John J-H Kim and Dani Dichter in *District Management Journal*, Todd Rogers (Student Social Support Lab and In Class Today) talks about how families and students can be influenced by thoughtful, low-cost interventions. Rogers started working on this when he learned how little the parents of high-school students know about their kids' school lives. “It’s not that there’s anyone trying to exclude families from schools,” he says, “but... there’s a natural feedback process where schools think parents don’t want to know and don’t want to be involved. Parents get the impression that schools don’t want them involved, and at the same time kids want autonomy and they’re pushing parents away anyway.”

One important area is student attendance. “There are multiplying externalities and growing consequences of chronic absenteeism,” says Rogers. Students fall behind, teachers have to get them back up to speed, students’ level of engagement suffers, and so does the culture of the class. What makes things more difficult is that there’s a story behind each absence. Maybe the kid doesn’t want to go to school, or the parent works at night, or there’s an illness in the family, or the family lost its home. How to address multiple possible causes in an effective way?

For starters, Rogers and his colleagues found that parents tend to underestimate how often their kids have been absent, and believe that their own children’s attendance is better than that of other students in the school. So the researchers sent postcards to parents updating them on their kids’ attendance record up to that point and comparing it to that of other students. In several school districts, this simple process brought about a 10-15 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism, with very little investment of time and resources. “We’re just drawing parents’ attention to the issue and we’re also correcting their false beliefs,” says Rogers. “They don’t realize how many days their kid has missed in total or how their kid’s absences compare to those of their classmates. But when all of a sudden they realize it, it alarms them.”

Interestingly, the researchers found that e-mailing or texting these attendance updates had no impact at all. Why? Because the hard-copy postcards “become social artifacts in the home,” says Rogers. “People report putting them on the fridge or putting them on the kitchen counter, and they end up being talked-about objects. They have a social life in the home – a shelf life. Digital communications are great for immediate action, but absenteeism is a behavior that unfolds over time.”

That’s why texting parents with the news that their child hasn’t turned in a homework assignment or is in jeopardy of failing a subject is highly effective. This is immediate, actionable information and parents follow up, in many cases turning around problematic student behaviors and improving achievement. If all teachers are using the same electronic grading systems and the school has up-to-date cell phone numbers for parents, the process is quite easy to implement. “If we give

Quote of the Week . . .



Don't regret the past, just
learn from it.

parents more useful information,” says Rogers, “they’ll use it, they’ll improve student achievement, and they’ll want more of it.”

Another approach is asking students, “Who in your world cares about you and cares if you finish school?” Students come up with a wide range of responses: My Mom. My grandmother. My manager at Home Depot. My girlfriend. My coach. My pastor. The researchers launched a project getting students to nominate the person who cared most about their academic success and designated those people as the student’s “study supporter.” In the case of the Home Depot manager, they sent a text saying, “Hey, John, you see Todd at work every day. This week he has a midterm. Ask him what his study plan is and what he’s worried about.” And the following week, another text: “Hey, John, ask Todd what his plan is for getting his homework and reading done for the rest of this semester. Ask him what his plan is for making sure he has enough to study.”

The study supporter idea is getting promising results in several settings, says Rogers, and his group is following up with programs in a variety of schools. “We give these supporters hard-copy activities to talk to the kid about,” he says. “We send report cards to the pastor or coach; we send the class schedule, etc. The idea is to turn the social system that cares about the kid into an academic support system. These are all pre-existing resources that are just unleveraged. It’s investing in the community around kids and leveraging social capital – and also building social capital.” (He notes that FERPA – the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – needs to be addressed when sending student records to someone other than the student’s parent or guardian.)

“Improving Academic Outcomes with a Nudge from Behavioral Science: An Interview with Todd Rogers” by John J-H Kim and Dani Dichter in *District Management Journal*, Spring 2018 (Vol. 23, p. 4-11), no e-link. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 735.

Thoughts on Teacher Appreciation Day

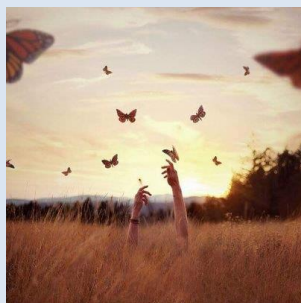
By: Dan Rather

It's [#TeacherAppreciationDay](#) - a day that really should be more than the status quo for the entire year. As we see teachers marching for more resources for public education, I sense that most Americans are largely on their side. It is a matter of justice and common sense. Public schools are vital for our nation's economic, political, and social stability.

In honor of this day, I wanted to share an excerpt from the essay "Public Education" in my book WHAT UNITES US. Mrs. Simmons, I think about you frequently.

When I entered first grade in 1937, Texas was still mostly rural, and Houston was a far cry from the sprawling metropolis it is today. William G. Love Elementary School was in one of the poorer sections of town, but it was rich in leadership and dedicated, talented teachers. All of them were women. In that period, with few exceptions, the only work outside the

Disney Tweet of the Week



**"You control your destiny -
- you don't need magic to
do it. And there are no
magical shortcuts to
solving your problems."**

-- Merida (Brave)

home open to a woman was as a nurse, a secretary, a waitress, or a teacher. And teaching was an option for only the comparatively few women who had finished college. So it is no wonder that Love Elementary, in the heart of "the wrong part of town," was loaded not just with women, but with very smart, hardworking women.

The principal, Mrs. Simmons, was the smartest, hardest-working of them all, and she was a potent force in my early life. With the exception of my parents, she probably did more than anyone else to shape me into the person I would become. Mrs. Simmons ran her school as a kind of benevolent dictatorship. She personally hired every teacher. She knew every student's name. She was in and out of all the classrooms every day, checking, directing, encouraging, and spreading her creed of "Love conquers all." It was a play on the school's name, of course, but it also formed the basis for her mantra: "We all love to learn and we love one another."

Don't be misled by all this talk of "love," however. School under Mrs. Simmons was a protective place, but you weren't coddled. She was a tough disciplinarian who had zero tolerance for any misbehavior. If you acted up in class, got into a shoving match on the playground, or disrespected a teacher, you wound up in Mrs. Simmons's office. She would sit in her over-large upholstered chair behind her spartan desk, and you would sit on the single wooden chair before it. The Texas and American flags stood imposingly in each corner, and the mottled light filtered in through the two large oak trees behind her windows. It was the last place any kid wanted to be.

Mrs. Simmons would tell you in no uncertain terms of your punishment, and then she would call or write your parents. In our neighborhood, few people could afford telephones, and if they had a phone, they had only "party line" service, sharing their line with many other households. These phones were often busy, so Mrs. Simmons usually sent notes home. The notes would encourage (actually, require) your parents to come in for a chat. She minced no words. When she felt it was needed, she would remind you and your parents that her natural decency and kindness (her "Love conquers all") should not be misunderstood; she could be — and, when necessary, would be — a lioness. Sometimes, to both break the ice and make a point, she would explain, "You know, there's tough. There's street tough — Heights tough . . . and then there is prison tough." After a pause, she would invariably add, in a voice I can still remember, "And trust me, friends, I can be prison tough and beyond if I have to be." She was joking, overstating, but not by much. Her talks were especially popular with fathers in the neighborhood. She spoke their language...

One of my most vivid memories from Love Elementary School was how the now-overlooked Arbor Day holiday was always a marked occasion on the school calendar. Mrs. Simmons would take a great personal interest, directing the yearly activity of planting a tree on the school grounds. Each year we would gather around to see a delicate sapling go into the soil. Our responsibilities had but just begun. We were formed into rotating teams in the months after the planting, tasked with nourishing the young trees into maturity. We took that job very seriously, an instinct I would like to think we learned from our teachers.

On a recent trip to Houston with one of my grandsons, we drove past my old school. In many ways it looked the same as when I had gone there, and as we paused for a moment I could see the echoes of my much younger self. Each school day, Love Elementary is once again filled with girls and boys who have their entire lives ahead of them. They will grow, and they will have to be nurtured. I was happy to see that five of the six trees we students planted during my time at the school remained standing. There was that marvelous magnolia. There was one of the solid oaks. I thought of what a wonderful metaphor these trees were for education. They were planted as an investment in the future. They have weathered many storms to provide shade to the generations who followed me. They stood

Important Websites

[Help Desk \(To submit a ticket\)](#)
help.desk@reading.k12.ma.us

[RPS District Website](#)
www.reading.k12.ma.us

[Access Your Email](#)
<https://login.microsoftonline.com/>

[Baseline Edge](#)
<https://baseline.ioeducation.com/Site/login>

[Interface Health Services](#)
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading>

Need help finding mental health care?



The Town of Reading has contracted with a unique **HELPLINE** service staffed by licensed clinicians that can help children, teens, & adults in Reading become connected with **mental health care**. Get provider matches that meet your specific needs, accepts your insurance & has available appointments.

Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>

tall, and proud. They had taken root and been allowed to thrive under a canopy of love. And so had I.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

RMHS High Fives For This Week

Below are the RMHS High Fives for this week.

Maeve Swanton, Class of 2018



Maeve is being recognized for her excellence in academics, athletics, leadership, and service. Academically, Maeve is a hard-working student and is a member of the National Honor Society who has challenged herself by taking AP Biology, AP Spanish, and AP Statistics. In addition to these college-level classes, she has enjoyed the interdisciplinary topics of her History and Science of Epidemic Disease class. Athletically, Maeve is a 4-year member of the Girls Varsity Soccer Team, serving as captain this past season and helping lead the Lady Rockets to a tournament appearance in her junior year. She is a 3-year member of the Girls Indoor Track Team and captain this year and was recognized as a Middlesex League All-Star in her junior and senior year for the 300-meter. Maeve is also a 4-year member of the Girls Outdoor Varsity Track Team where she is a captain and was named a Middlesex League All-Star in her junior year for the 400-meter. In terms of clubs and activities, Maeve is a member of the Samantha's Harvest Club, Senior Class Office, and Habitat for Humanity where she too went to North Carolina this past summer and assisted in the construction of houses for underprivileged families. She also assists in the summer at the Outdoor Track Camp, mentoring and coaching middle school-aged children. Next fall, Maeve will be attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst where she will run Indoor and Outdoor Track and will study Biology.

Contact Us

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

Alec Gibbs, Class of 2018



Alec is being recognized for his outstanding accomplishments in academics, athletics, activities, and service. Alec is a member of the National Honor Society and has excelled in both his English and History classes over the past four years. He has particularly enjoyed studying challenging and complex topics including the Hungarian genocide and Calculus. Alec received the Perseverance Award in his sophomore year for his efforts in Math. Athletically, Alec has been a 2-year member of the Boys Varsity Basketball Team and remembers this past season's highlight as being a 30-point rout of Middlesex League rival, Stoneham. He has also been a 4-year member of the RMHS Baseball Program, playing this year as a member of the Boys Varsity Team. Alec has helped the Rockets get off to a strong 8-2 start, most recently contributing to a 7th inning comeback win against Lexington. He is also the president of the Samantha's Harvest Club and is a member of Habitat for Humanity, where last summer, he joined other Reading students in North Carolina helping to build homes for families facing economic hardship. Alec also has been an assistant coach for the EMARC Special Olympics Basketball Team, where he helped guide the team to the State Tournament this past season. He has also helped organize a number of fundraising events for the Samantha's Harvest Club—including road races and buddy walks. Next year, Alec will be attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst where he will study Economics.

Teachers Step Up For Colleen

Last Sunday, Reading Public School Teachers participated in the 5th Annual Step Up for Colleen 5K Road Race held in Andover. This race was established in the memory of Danvers Teacher and Andover native Colleen Ritzer who was killed 5 years ago at Danvers High School. The proceeds from the race go towards the Colleen Ritzer Scholarship Fund for students in Andover and Danvers who are pursuing a career in education. A special thanks goes to all of those teachers who participated on Sunday!



RMHS Food Service Staff Having Some Fun

Fun with RMHS students with Plinko, free lanyards, and a healthy hot breakfast at RMHS. Thanks to Karleen Sayman and Edra Santos for their leadership and creativity!!



Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Coolidge teacher **Amy Beth Gelineau** on the birth of her son on May 9th weighing 6 lbs. 4 oz.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Anne O'Brien, Special Education Paraeducator, RISE
 - ✓ Victoria Arthur, Long Term Substitute French Teacher; Coolidge
- We have posted a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

1.0 FTE Spanish Teacher, Reading Memorial High School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=490
--

1.0 FTE Special Education Learning Center Teacher, Coolidge Middle School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=491
--

1.0 FTE Instructional Technology Integration Specialist, Coolidge Middle School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=492
--

Special Education Program Paraeducator – 60 hours biweekly, Coolidge Middle School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=493
K-6 Curriculum Coordinator for Humanities https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=494
1.0 FTE School Psychologist, Joshua Eaton Elementary School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=495

Blazing Trails...

"Depth & Dimension: 3D Teaching - Not Printing!" This blog post by Natick, Massachusetts educator Jed Stefanowicz, has nothing to do with 3D printing. It's about teaching and learning with *depth*, in 3D. It's about diving beneath the surface, adding dimension. It's about depth of understanding, of mastery, of demonstration of skills and application learning. These 3 "Ds" enhance and add a dimension for teachers, students, and classroom environments. [Read More](#)

"Behavior Beyond Compliance: Social and Emotional Implications." In this ASCD InService post, author Toby Karten looks at how we structure emotionally safe school and classroom environments. Learners with pervasive shyness, unhappiness, fear, depression, anxiety, obsession, compulsion, anger, noncompliance, social awkwardness, lack of impulse control, attention issues, and other social, emotional, and behavioral difference face challenges in the classroom. In addition, students who receive higher test scores do not always translate to mentally healthy learners. [Read More](#)

"Do Leaders Really Understand the Research They Promote?" Educator and author Peter DeWitt comments here in a Corwin blog post: "How often have you heard the words 'research-based' used in your presence? Are you tired of hearing them? If you often drop those words in a conversation, are you sure you are using them correctly? Have you read the research, or just merely looked at the Cliff Note's version of it?" [Read More](#)

"Why It's Best to Study Languages Before Age 10." Gaining optimal proficiency in a new language similar to that of a native speaker may be more likely if learning begins before age 10, according to a study published in the journal Cognition. Researchers also found that high-level understanding of a new language drops off after age 17 or 18. [Read More](#)

"Report Offers Blueprint for Change in Australia Schools." Schools in Australia need to shift from an industrial model to one that focuses on "learning progressions," according to a report commissioned by federal education minister Simon Birmingham. The report includes 23 recommendations, offering a "comprehensive blueprint for change in the way we look at teaching and school operations," Birmingham said. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!