



Pathways

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

September 9, 2018

Volume 6, Number 2

Upcoming Dates

- September 9 – (8:00 a.m.) Fall Street Faire 5K @ Washington park, (12:00 p.m.) Reading Street Faire; Rosh Hashanah begins at Sundown.
- September 11 – Rosh Hashanah ends at Sundown
- September 12 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release; Middle School Open Houses – Check with your child's school for time.
- September 18 – Yom Kippur begins at sundown
- September 19 – Yom Kippur ends at sundown
- September 20 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the RMHS Library
- September 24 – (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Guidance – Financial Aid Night in the Endslo PAC
- September 26 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Open House
- September 27 – (6:30 p.m.) RCASA Annual Meeting in the Endslo PAC

Providing Accommodations for Students on Religious Holidays

Over the next week, 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 and the implementation regulations, IMDA-R are 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 Sunday, September 9th and ends at sundown on Tuesday, September 11th.

Yom Kippur: Begins at sundown on Tuesday, September 18th and ends at sundown on Wednesday, September 19th.

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 10, 11, 12, 19, and 20th.**

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 10, 11, or 19.**

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 **September 9 (evening), 10, 11, 18 (evening), and 19.**

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the football, girls soccer, golf and volleyball on opening wins this week.
- To our Preschool and Elementary Teachers for an amazing Open House last week.

Absences on Religious Holidays

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

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.



TIME TO APPLY FOR READING CULTURAL COUNCIL GRANTS

For Community-oriented Arts, Humanities, and Science Programs

Apply online before October 15, 2018. Applications will be available September 1.

The Reading Cultural Council (RCC) encourages organizations interested in funding support for 2018-2019 community-oriented arts, humanities and science programs in Reading to submit an application for funding.

Online application forms will be available after September 1, 2018 at <https://www.mass-culture.org/Reading>. Applications must be submitted on or before October 15, 2018. You can start an application and save it midway and return to complete and submit it later. Paper applications will not be accepted. Applicants will be invited to meet with the committee in November to explain the project. Grant awards will be announced in January 2019.

Projects should contribute to the cultural vitality of the Reading community and be performed at an accessible Reading venue (field trip projects excepted). Before submitting an application, please review the Reading Cultural Council's priorities which are listed here: <https://www.mass-culture.org/Reading>.

Because the demand for funds typically exceeds available funds, only one application will be accepted from each organization or applicant unless different constituencies are being

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

9/10 Superintendent's
Office
4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

9/12 Joshua Eaton
12:30 – 1:30

9/17 Birch Meadow
7:45 – 8:45 a.m.

9/19 Wood End
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

9/21 Parker
7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

served. Programs must have alternate sources of funding and guarantee they will run with only partial RCC funding. Grants are reimbursement-based, meaning the applicant organization expends its own money and if approved for a grant, submits paperwork for reimbursement.

Reading Cultural Council Chair Donna Schenkel emphasizes that Reading Cultural Council grants support a variety of community organizations and interests from arts, humanities and science projects and activities in Reading, to school field trips, in-school and after-school programs, concerts, festivals, lectures, theater, dance, music, film and more. Projects take place in our Reading schools, the library, the senior center, elder care facilities, town hall, parks, and other locations where the community comes together. Projects should serve Reading residents.

In FY18, the Reading Cultural Council awarded \$6561 to support the arts and humanities programming of twelve (12) organizations.

About the Reading Cultural Council

The Reading Cultural Council is part of a network of Local Cultural Councils (LCC) serving all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. This is the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based art, science and humanities projects every year. The Massachusetts state legislature provides an annual appropriation to the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, which then allocates funds to each community cultural council.

Consider Joining the Reading Cultural Council

If you are an advocate for or lover of local arts and culture, please consider joining our Council. Members of the Reading Cultural Council are volunteers appointed by the Reading Board of Selectmen. To learn more, visit the Reading Cultural Council page on the Town of Reading website [readingma.gov/cultural-council], contact Donna Schenkel, chair, [readingculturalcouncil@gmail.com] or speak to the Reading Town Clerk.

How Restorative Justice Helps Students Learn

Restorative justice allows everyone affected by a harm to return to a calm state that is optimal for learning.

By **Jacquelyn Richards** for **Edutopia**

September 4, 2018

Restorative justice (RJ) offers healthy alternatives to the traditional disciplinary approach of rules and the consequences of breaking those rules. RJ practices such as peer conflict resolution circles, reflection sheets that guide conversations with a teacher or administrator, and mediated student-student or student-adult conversations are practices that allow students and communities to feel safe and successful together.

While traditional rules-and-consequences discipline is sometimes effective in stopping detrimental behaviors, it may have negative effects on the long-term resilience and connection within the community. It's worth considering the impact that such discipline has on our nervous systems, on the relationships within our schools, and on students' identity and self-esteem, and what RJ has to offer as an alternative.

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AND OUR SENSE OF CONNECTION

Picture a student who has just passed a note in class or pushed a peer in the hallway and a teacher who has caught this student in the act. In this moment of rule violation and the confrontation that follows, the student, the teacher, and sometimes even nearby observers

can experience a sympathetic nervous system response—muscular tension, an increase in heart rate, elevated levels of cortisol and adrenaline, and shortness of breath—also known as the “fight, flight, freeze, or submit” response. This is the body preparing to protect itself from a real or perceived threat or danger.

When a traditional rules-and-consequences approach is used to address errant behavior, the misbehaving student is often left to regulate their nervous system on their own—or not, as we see with students who transgress in the morning and then continue to act out or have a difficult time focusing throughout the day.

For an educator or administrator, it can be taxing when a student continues to act out and/or worrisome when a student begins to exhibit detrimental emotions and self-destructive behaviors. Simply punishing a behavior doesn’t allow for space to inquire about the motivation behind a misstep or what’s needed to repair the harm.

RJ practices help all community members involved to calm or regulate their nervous systems by focusing on authentic reconnection after a rupture occurs. When we’re connected, we naturally feel safer and our nervous systems have a better chance of returning to the parasympathetic “rest and digest” mode that is optimal for learning.

RJ practices allow us to recognize how the offender, victim, witnesses, and guiding adult are all impacted by the harm that occurred, and will all benefit from a reparative or restorative process to feel safe again in the school environment.

Applied in various ways, RJ practices always ask all parties involved:

- What happened?
- What harm was caused?
- What needs to happen to repair the harm?

Through RJ, students and adults learn about each other’s perspectives and build empathy and understanding, developing a greater sense of trust in one another. The transgressing student has the opportunity to repair harm by acknowledging their wrongdoing, expressing remorse, and taking action based upon the victim’s needs to repair trust. Victims are able to share their experience, offer forgiveness, and make amends. Having a chance to rebuild relationship after a misstep and to foster empathy, attunement, and accountability helps the whole community to feel safe and more connected.

No matter the level of severity of a rule violation—even when a student is asked to leave a community—the RJ process fortifies compassion and empathy for others and humanizes the experience of mistake-making.

SUPPORTING SELF-ESTEEM

When someone—a student or an adult—feels unsafe at home or experiences discrimination for their background, identity, or other reasons, they may come to school with an already overstimulated nervous system. This means it’s easier for them to become dysregulated—to experience a sympathetic fight, flee, freeze, or submit response—during a rule violation or enforcement moment.

Psychologically, a student who breaks a rule and receives punishment may begin to identify as a “bad kid,” and may be seen by their peers as someone who always get into trouble—a cycle that is sometimes repeated again and again. Through the reflective processes of RJ, this student can instead learn about the impact of their actions and reflect upon their

Quote of the Week . . .

Free your heart from hatred.
Free your mind from worries.
Live simply.
Give more.
Expect less.



“Remember the five simple rules to be happy:
Free your heart from hatred. Free your mind from worries. Live simply. Give more. Expect less.”

Nisban Panwar

membership in the community. They have a chance to grow self-esteem and to perceive themselves as a human who has made a mistake or bad decision and is taking responsibility for their actions.

Rather than simply doling out a punishment without guidance, RJ reminds us all that mistakes are learning opportunities for growth and that offenders have the opportunity to take responsibility for their behavior, repair the harm they have caused, and work toward a positive outcome.

A learning community that engages in connection building to repair harm becomes more resilient over time via more trusting connections between community members, increased self-awareness and compassion, and regulated nervous systems.

Spot signs of teen risk behavior

Hidden in plain sight

Our 3-day Open House for PARENTS & CAREGIVERS will feature a teen's bedroom to test parents' awareness of common household items that can be substance abuse warning signs. The display is designed to encourage honest and candid discussion of the topics of underage drinking and substance misuse. Staff and volunteers will guide participants through the exhibit and answer questions. This free event is sponsored by the Burbank YMCA, RCASA and the Reading Police.

READING POLICE DEPARTMENT, 1ST FLOOR COMMUNITY ROOM
15 UNION STREET READING, MA

Stop by during any of the dates/times below...

| Monday Sept 24 2018 6PM-8PM | Tuesday Sept 25 2018 8AM-11AM 3PM-5PM | Wednesday Sept 26 2018 8AM-11AM |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|

THIS EXHIBIT IS FOR ADULTS ONLY

the YMCA Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse READING POLICE

Email jdeangelis@ci.reading.ma.us
www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa

Information from DESE

The Buzz-Amazing Educators!

Welcome back! We hope all of you had a great summer and that your school year is off to a wonderful start.

Commissioner Riley is starting his first full school year as commissioner by celebrating teachers. You may have seen or heard this [public service announcement](#) or seen a billboard thanking a teacher this month. Learn more at www.mass.gov/amazingeducators, including [how to nominate someone for a teaching award](#) and how students and former students can [speak up about their favorite teacher](#). Thank you for all that you do for Massachusetts students!

Teacher Reflection: What Motivates Students

Jamil Siddiqui, a mathematics teacher at East Bridgewater Junior/Senior High School, is the 2019 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. The following is adapted from remarks he gave during the teacher recognition ceremony at the State House in June. You can

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

[learn more](#) about Jamil and the Teacher of the Year award online, and you can follow him on Twitter at [@jamilsid312](#).

This week starts my 25th year as a math teacher in East Bridgewater. With all the excitement the new year brings, we, as teachers, need to remember to look beyond the surface and try to find out what motivates our students.

In my previous classroom, I had hung pictures of all of my AP Calculus classes, and under the pictures were the names of all of the students who had received a 5 on their AP exam. Over the years, I have heard back from many calculus students who told me that the number one reason they wanted a 5 was to be on the "Wall of Fame."

It was a different class that used my wall as motivation and surprised me, though. Early in my career, I was teaching a class called Tech Math. These students were not the most academically inclined group, but they had their own set of endearing qualities. I developed a decent rapport with them. After each test I gave the class, I would always ask them if there was any topic in mathematics they would like to learn about. Most of the time, they had nothing to say. One day, about halfway through the year, they asked me about the names on my wall, and I explained why they were there. Since the majority of the students in the class were seniors, they would not be able to take calculus with me, so that discussion ended rather quickly. A few weeks later, after the next test, they noticed a list of names on my side whiteboard and inquired about those. I told them those names were the names of the students who had passed the timed trigonometry quiz that I give. Another few weeks passed, and I asked if there was anything they would like to learn, and the Tech Math students responded, "Teach us trigonometry, so we can get our names on your sideboard." I went one better than that and said that if they got a perfect score on a trig quiz, I would paint their names permanently on a block in the wall.

During the next three weeks, I taught them trigonometry from the beginning, and they soaked it up. I gave them one chance to take the trig quiz, knowing that a perfect score meant trigonometry immortality on my wall. Thirty percent of that class earned a perfect score on that quiz. Most educators would have said those students had no business learning trigonometry. The material was at least two years beyond their curriculum, but for that unit, they trained as hard as any of my classes and proved to themselves and everyone else they could do it. It was all motivated by a brick in my wall.

As we start this year, let's remember all students can be successful, and all students want to learn. We cannot let any preconceived ideas stop us from getting our classes to reach their full potential. Let's get to know our students and develop strong relationships. My Tech Math class taught me all students are capable of succeeding if they are properly motivated and have the support of their teachers, and for that I am grateful.

[Get Involved: Opportunity to Serve on MCAS Committees](#)

We're looking for public school educators to serve as members of the MCAS Assessment Development Committees in English language arts, math, and science, and on the MCAS Bias and Sensitivity Committees. Committee members are directly involved in helping DESE develop MCAS test items. We strongly encourage educators of diverse backgrounds and who teach diverse students to apply.

Important Websites

RPS District Website
www.reading.k12.ma.us

Interface Health Services
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading>

Need help finding mental health care?

WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE
INTERFACE Referral Service
The Town of Reading has contracted with a unique HELPLINE service staffed by licensed clinicians that can help children, teens, & adults in Reading become connected with mental health care. Get provider matches that meet your specific needs, accepts your insurance & has available appointments.
Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>

More information and the application are available online. The deadline to complete the online application and submit all materials is **Friday, October 5, 2018**. Please share this opportunity with colleagues who may be interested.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

Opening Day at Coolidge

Students in Coolidge Grade 6 Teacher Ann Jacobsmeier's class celebrate the upcoming New England Patriot's Opening Game on Sunday.



Stepping Stones...

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Allison Kelley, Special Education Paraeducator, Wood End
 - ✓ Liana Crugnale, Special Education Paraeducator, Wood End
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

| |
|--|
| After School Building Monitor, RISE Preschool https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=595 |
| Special Education Program Paraeducator, 61.5 hours biweekly, RMHS https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=596 |
| Regular Education Paraeducator, 12 hours biweekly, Killam Elementary School (repost) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=597 |
| 0.4 FTE Spanish Teacher, Reading Memorial High School (repost) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=598 |

- **Running in Memory of Patrick Schettini**-Aaron Geller, nephew of former Reading Superintendent, Patrick A. Schettini, Jr., will be running the New York City Marathon in November in honor of Pat's life and for the Project Purple charity, which donates all money to helping research and find a cure for Pancreatic Cancer. Aaron states the following:

"This year I will be running the 2018 NYC Marathon in honor of my dear Uncle Pat who suddenly was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer and passed away on December 26, 2009. My Uncle Pat was the kindest, most selfless person I have ever known. He was the Superintendent of Schools, he had a law school degree and passed the bar, he served on many Boards throughout town, but with all his responsibilities and hectic schedule, what stands out the most in my mind, is his undying love for me

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

and my family and how he never missed a family or school event! My dear Uncle was more like a father figure to me and instilled in me his incredible values as a person. I hope he knew how much I admired him. He taught me many valuable lessons that have shaped me into the person I am today. I hope through me I can carry on his legacy, as this terrible disease took him too young and there was so much more he had to give. I think of him often as I go through my life and what he taught me, and I hope what he instilled in me earns me the same respect that I watched others have for him. I am honored to raise money for a such a great charity to help fight this terrible disease that took away my uncle, my mentor and my friend."

If you are interested in supporting this cause, a donation page has been created, which can be accessed [here](#).

Blazing Trails...

"Massachusetts Principal Liz Garden to Focus on Students' Passions." Massachusetts elementary-school principal Liz Garden says she will seek to "capitalize on kids' passions" to spur academic growth at her new school. Garden says her top priorities for the year will be earning the staff's trust and getting to know students. [Read More](#)

"Setting the Tone for a Mindful School." What do mindful behaviors, like attention to breathing, have to do with feeling safe, loved and ready to learn? Research suggests that if you change the way you breathe, you can change the way you feel. Try short mindfulness activities with students throughout the day to help them calm down, relieve stress and decrease misbehavior. [Read More](#)

"#BestYearEver: Kick-Starting the Year with Passion." School leaders can set the tone for a successful year by making aesthetic improvements to the school and hanging motivational posters, asserts Robyn Harris, Alaska's 2018 Principal of the Year. In this blog post, Harris also suggests meeting students at the school bus and inviting parents to a "Parent University." [Read More](#)

"The Purpose, Planning, and Personal Connections That Will Sustain You All Year." A veteran educator has four practices she applies to organize her classroom for the rest of the school year. From lists of facts that foster student relationships to daily routines to reminders of why teaching is important, a little bit of planning before the first day of school can go a long way and sustain enthusiasm all year long. [Read More](#)

"If Students Aren't Trying on International Tests, Can We Still Compare Countries' Results?" Some students who take the Program for International Student Assessment may not be trying their best -- potentially skewing the results, according to a study by researchers from Pennsylvania State University. Researchers mined keystroke data from PISA exams and found that in many cases, students skip questions or quit the exam early. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week