



# Pathways

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

September 16, 2018

Volume 6, Number 3

## Upcoming Dates

- 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
- October 5 – (11:00 a.m.) Prek – 5 Early Release, Teacher In-Service Day, (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Game Night
- October 6 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing @ RMHS
- October 8 – No School – No School/Offices Closed
- October 10 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release, PSAT Testing @ RMHS

## United States Department of Education Visits RPS

Last Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, the US DOE Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services visited the Reading Public Schools to see some of our special education programs. The visit included Assistant Secretary Johnny Collett and Deputy Assistant Secretary Kim Richey. Russell Johnston, Associate Commissioner from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also joined the US DOE. The focus of the visit was on rethinking special education and Reading was recommended as a district to visit because of its strong special education programs. During the visit, the Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, and Associate Commissioner saw the work that were doing at Birch Meadow, RISE, and RMHS to support students with disabilities. In addition, they heard from teachers, specialists, district coaches and administrators about the ways that we are supporting students and how the Department can remove obstacles so that we could focus more of our time and energy on educating students. and they are hoping to hear from staff and school leaders about ways we are supporting our students. It was an honor to have our teachers recognized for the work they do to support all learners.

Thank you to all of the teachers, specialists, coaches, and administrators who participated in the visit. A special thanks goes to Carolyn Wilson who planned and coordinated the event.



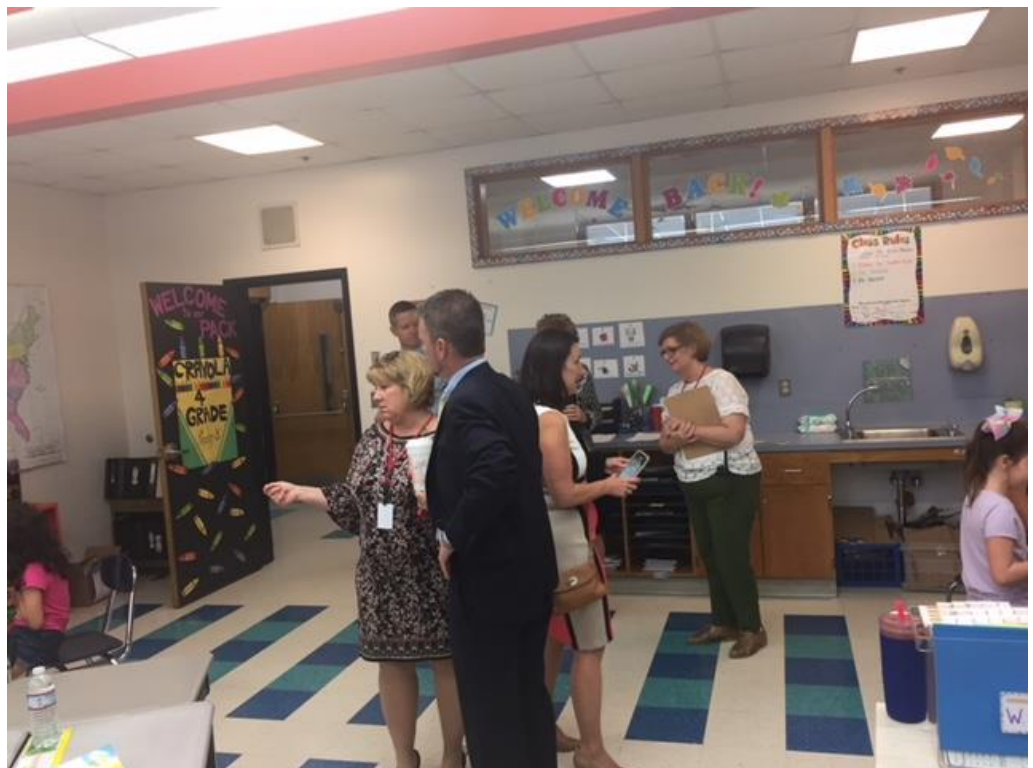
*DESE Associate Commissioner Russell Johnson visiting a RISE Classroom*

## Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the field hockey, swimming, golf and volleyball on wins this week.
- To our Middle School Teachers for an amazing Open House last week.
- To the staff of Birch Meadow, RISE, and the High School for being so welcoming and accommodating for the USDOE visit on Friday. Your classrooms were amazing!
- To Carolyn Wilson for planning the USDOE visit on Friday.
- To Director of Facilities Joe Huggins for providing guidance in the development of last week's Newsletter.



*Assistant Secretary of Education Johnny Collett visiting a RISE Classroom*



*USDOE and DESE Delegate with Reading Administrators visiting Grade 4 Birch Meadow Classroom*

## Superintendent's Office

### Hours this Week

*All are welcome*

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.

9/26 Barrows  
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

9/27 Superintendent's  
Office  
3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

## Killam Staff Encourage Student Attendance

As part of their yearlong goal to communicate the importance of coming to school, Killam Staff created this video that encourages student attendance and why it matters every day. A special thanks goes to Killam School Psychologist Alice Gomez who produced the video. You can access the video link [here](#) or below.



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## Providing Accommodations for Students on Religious Holidays

This week, there will be teachers, students, and their families who will be celebrating and observing a major religious Jewish holiday 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 holiday is recognized by the Reading Public Schools as major religious holidays:

**Yom Kippur:** Begins at sundown on Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> and ends at sundown on Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup>.

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 Yom Kippur holidays. **Therefore, there will be no assignments due in any classroom in the Reading Public Schools on September 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>.**

No tests or quizzes will be scheduled on Yom Kippur. **Therefore, there will be no tests or quizzes scheduled on September 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 Yom Kippur. Therefore, there will be no one-time events scheduled on **September 18 (evening), and 19.**

### **Absences on Religious Holidays**

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

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.

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## **RCASA Honored in Washington D.C. for National Recovery Month Award**

Sherri VandenAkker, representing the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA) Board of Directors, accepted the National Recovery Month Award in Washington, D.C. on September 6, 2018 for **RCASA's 2017 Reading Unites for Recovery Project**. RCASA was one of three projects in the United States to receive this special recognition at the **Recovery Month Luncheon: Invest in Health, Home, Purpose and Community**. The luncheon event was hosted by SAMHSA and the National Council on Behavioral Health's Mental Health First Aid Initiative. Learn more at [www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa)





## Quote of the Week . . .



“Let your smile change the world, don't let the world change your smile.”

Connor Franta



### **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 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.

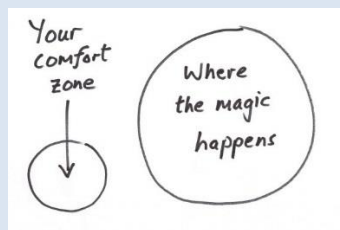
#### About the Reading Cultural Council

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

## Disney Tweet of the Week



"Venture outside your comfort zone. The rewards are worth it."

-- Rapunzel

Board of Selectmen. To learn more, visit the Reading Cultural Council page on the Town of Reading website [[readingma.gov/cultural-council](http://readingma.gov/cultural-council)], contact Donna Schenkel, chair, [[readingculturalcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:readingculturalcouncil@gmail.com)] or speak to the Reading Town Clerk.

## 6 Ways to Build a Rapport With Students

New teachers sometimes struggle with establishing relationships with students, so a veteran shares a few tips on how to get started.

By [Helen Boyd](#) for [Edutopia](#)

How do we get the best out of our students? By building a rapport with them. We hear that over and over again, but do we really know what that looks like or what that means? It's not about preaching to them or trying to make them better people. It's about learning who they are, accepting and celebrating their uniqueness, and really listening to them.

### STRATEGIES FOR GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS BETTER

**1. Stand in the hall between classes.** Take a little break to chat with students as they pass by. Smile, say hi, comment on that cute new haircut. Make yourself actually notice the kids. I know it seems like you could get work done at your desk, but really, what can you accomplish in that three minutes?

Standing in the hall outside your door allows you to be seen and chat with students as they walk by. You'll always find that one tough nut, but I bet if you keep at it, they will greet you before the year is over.

Standing in the hall also lets you welcome your kids to your room every day, and it's wonderful for them to enter a place where someone is glad to see them.

This is also the first step in making your class a safe and welcoming place. Don't stand for bullying or belittling of anyone for any reason. Don't do it yourself, and stop it if you see it.

**2. Advise a club or open your room for study sessions.** Coaching a sport is one way to interact with students outside of class, but it's far from the only way. If there aren't any clubs in need of an advisor, ask your students if there's anything they want and propose a new club. Or just host an informal book club with interested students.

I'm an early bird, so I open my room up for students before the school day to work on a computer, print things out, or do whatever they need. I'm already there, so why not?

**3. Go to school events if possible, but try to see students outside of class.** The kids will love to see you at their games. I set a goal to go to one event for each sport. Even if I can't stay the whole time, the students appreciate that I came out. Plus, when I say, "Hey, nice hustle last night," they know I actually saw it.

You also have students who don't participate in sports but may be in 4H or ride a skateboard—try to see these students in their element.

I'm deathly afraid of birds and my students know it, so the look on a student's face when I came to his poultry show at our local fair was worth the blood I drew squeezing my husband's arm. A lot of the time—as with that fair—I was going to go anyway. But you can also stop at McDonald's and buy a coffee if that's where a student works.

And if you can't make it to events outside of school, just asking how they went will let the students know that you think of them as people beyond their academic work.

## 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?



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

Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm

<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>

**4. Pay attention to and respect their nonverbal behavior.** Students are entitled to their personal space just like you are. If they keep their arm over their work or move away from you as you walk by, respect that and don't take it personally. If they don't want you to look over their shoulder, don't. Try asking them to show you what they're working on.

**5. Always, always look for the good in them.** I start each year with a notebook that I carry to every meeting and always have on my desk. It's my lifeline for the year. I fill it with ideas, due dates, etc., but most importantly, a few weeks into the year I make a list of students who I believe have had little or no positive communication from the school. I look up their addresses and phone numbers so I have them ready.

And then I wait and watch, staying on the lookout for something positive. I can then easily and quickly call home or write a note—I always send these by mail so that families have a physical copy. So many students have said to me, "Thank you, I got extra allowance," or "My mom put it on the refrigerator."

I don't ignore the "good" kids—it's easy to see their accomplishments, and I contact their homes as well, but I make myself look for something positive in the students who haven't had the best school experiences.

**6. Last of all, be sincere.** Teenagers can spot a phony from miles away. You became a teacher because you have a passion for your subject area and a passion for young people. Let them know that however you can.



Reading  
Coalition  
Against  
Substance  
Abuse

LET'S

CELEBRATE

## 12th Annual Coalition Meeting

September 27, 2018 || 7 pm

Reading Memorial High School  
62 Oakland Rd. Reading, MA

[www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa)

Join RCASA to celebrate our  
accomplishments. Our keynote speaker this  
year will be Sherri VandeAkke, Ph.D.



## WHAT I WISH I KNEW...

### When Someone You Love Suffers From A Substance Use Disorder

Sherri VandenAkke, Ph.D., is a member of the Executive Board of the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA) and a member of the Reading School Committee. She directed and co-produced the multiple award-winning documentary *My Name Was Bette: The Life and Death of an Alcoholic*, a film that chronicles her mother's death from alcoholism and examines how the disease impacts women. Sherri is a tenured professor at the Springfield College School of Professional and Continuing Studies where she teaches research, writing, and literature courses to adult learners and a part-time faculty member at the University of Massachusetts Amherst University Without Walls program where she teaches a course that explores the impact of technology on society. She is also a passionate nature photographer.

## 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)

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
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THIS EXHIBIT IS FOR ADULTS ONLY

the YMCA Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse READING POLICE

Email [jdeangelis@ci.reading.ma.us](mailto:jdeangelis@ci.reading.ma.us)  
[www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa)

## Reading Public School Happenings

### RMHS Volleyball Team Community Service

Last Sunday, the RMHS Volleyball Team, under the direction of Coach Michelle Hopkinson, travelled to Melrose to be the Marshalls of the Annual EMARC Road Race. The team has been providing this community service since 2011. Thank you to all who participated!







## Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go out to Director of Student Services **Carolyn Wilson** who lost a loved one recently.
- Our thoughts go out to Human Resources Administrator **Jenn Bove** who lost a loved one recently.
- Our thoughts go out to RMHS teacher **Mary Allard** who lost a loved one recently.
- Our thoughts go out to Birch Meadow teacher **Maria Simon** who lost a loved one recently.
- Our thoughts go out to RMHS teacher **Jeff Ryan** who lost a close family member recently.
- Congratulations to Killam teacher **Alison Matthews** on the birth of her daughter Violet Beth on September 5<sup>th</sup> weighing 8 lbs. 10 oz.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
  - ✓ Leigh Vaters, Long Term Substitute Reading Specialist, Killam
  - ✓ Lauren Jenkins, Special Education Paraeducator, Joshua Eaton
  - ✓ Kelsey Donovan, Special Education Paraeducator, Killam
  - ✓ Paul Basile, Extended Day Support, Wood End
  - ✓ Mary Ellen Mackin, Extended day After School Teacher, Killam
- **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 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](#).

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## Blazing Trails...

**"Innovation May Come from the Bottom, but Only with Support from the Top."** Ted Dintersmith, author of "What Schools Could Be: Insights and Inspiration from Teachers across America" is a businessman and education philanthropist who espouses the philosophy that true educational innovation comes at the grassroots level in the classroom, but requires support from school administrators and lawmakers, according to the Hechinger Report. [Read More](#)

**"How LeBron James' New Public School Really is the First of its Kind."** Hoping to help at-risk youth in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, basketball superstar LeBron James is launching the I Promise School, where students receive free bicycles, meals and tuition to the University of Akron, SB Nation reports. [Read More](#)

**"Reclaiming Your Time."** From ASCD Education Express: Is unorganized chaos getting in the way of a daily schedule that works for students? Educator Jessica F. Handley had trouble finding routines that worked for her until she took a closer look at the root problems disrupting them. She shares tips to refine routines and build classrooms where students know what to expect. [Read More](#)

**"Teach Students to Write Op-Eds."** Op-ed pieces give students a voice and allow them to showcase their personal links to the topics, writes middle-school history teacher Sarah Cooper. In this blog post, she explains how she approaches op-ed assignments and how the interactive process helps students improve their writing and research skills. [Read More](#)

**"Teacher Uses Inquiry-Based Approach for Lessons on China."** Doug Young, an award-winning teacher, coach and consultant, uses an inquiry-design model to teach students about China. In this blog post, he shares the approach, including asking compelling questions and assigning students performance tasks such as creating maps or outlines. [Read More](#)

**Have a Great Week**