



Pathways

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

January 6, 2018

Volume 6, Number 17

Upcoming Dates

- January 7 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in RMHS Library
- January 8 – (7:00 p.m.) Reading SEPAC Meeting in the Reading Police Community Room
- January 9 – (7:00 p.m.) RISE PTN Meeting in RISE Staff Room
- January 10 – Parker Parent Visitation Day; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Junior Parent Guidance Night
- January 17 (2:30 p.m.) Middle School Math Meet at Parker; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the RMHS Library
- January 18 & 19 – (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the Endslo PAC
- January 20 – (2:00 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the Endslo PAC
- January 21 – Martin Luther King Day – No School/Offices Closed; (10:00 a.m.) MLK Day Celebration @ RMHS
- January 22 – RMHS Midterms
- January 23 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release
- January 24 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the RMHS Library – Public Hearing on FY2020 Budget
- January 28 – Second Semester Begins; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in RMHS Library – FY2020 Budget Vote
- January 31 – (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Sophomore Parent Night in the Endslo PAC

Superintendent's Message and FY20 Budget Summary Overview

I respectfully present to the School Committee and the Greater Reading Community the FY20 Superintendent's Recommended Budget of \$46,467,348 representing an increase of \$1,607,073 or 3.6% over the FY19 budget. Copies of both the Superintendent's Recommended Budget and the MUNIS Accounting Ledger can be found at the Reading Public School website located [here](#). The increases are broken down by non-accommodated costs (all costs except special education out of district transportation and tuition and one community priority) which increased by 3.25% over the FY19 Budget and accommodated costs (special education out of district transportation and tuition and one community priority) which increased by 6.55% over the FY19 Budget.

This recommended budget aligns with the budget guidance that we received from the Reading Finance Committee on October 10, 2018 and subsequent discussions with the Town Manager and Town Accountant. The Finance Committee's recommended guidance is based on an analysis of current and future town revenue and expense projections of the Community.

Since the last Superintendent's budget message one year ago, there have been significant fiscal changes in our district, most of it has been positive. For the first time in my ten years developing and recommending budgets, I do not have to focus my introductory budget message on the funding challenges facing our school district. This is because our most positive change, which has impacted the entire community, was the community support last April of a proposition 2 ½ override ballot question which restored and retained teaching positions, added curriculum materials, replaced outdated and aged technology, increased professional development and training, and provided additional curriculum and special education supports for teachers. Because of this additional financial support, foreign language and additional language arts classes have continued at our middle schools, class sizes have been reduced at our elementary schools, and our high school is now able to offer more course sections, additional electives and Advanced Placement Courses for all students. We are grateful of the work that was done by our community, town, and school leaders who worked together to accomplish this significant achievement. I want to recognize the work of "Yes for Reading" under the leadership of Erin Gaffen and Michelle Sanphy for building the infrastructure and grass roots support necessary for this monumental task. In addition, I want to thank Town Manager Bob LeLacheur and Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom for their leadership and the Select Board and School Committee for their commitment and support toward the override. I also want to thank Chief Financial Officer Gail Dowd for the countless hours that she put in developing two budgets for last year's cycle and her commitment to the detail necessary to explain the budget story to the community. This was truly a team effort and the outcome would not have been possible without everyone working together.

Figure 1 provides an update on the override funding and Figure 2 reconciles the original FY19 budget as approved by the School Committee to the final budget approved by Town Meeting.

Figure 1: Override Funding Update

School Department Override Items	Status
16.0 FTE Teaching Positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.0 FTE Middle School positions retained 5.0 FTE High School Positions – 0.8 FTE RMHS remains open. We are currently reviewing the needs of the high school and appropriately identifying where the remaining 0.8 FTE should be assigned. 3.0 FTE Elementary positions retained 1.0 FTE Tutor hours retained
4.0 FTE Other Staff Additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.0 FTE Curriculum Coordinators –override positions filled utilizing a combination of funding for position and salary adjustment allocation 1.0 FTE Computer Technician – position filled within override approved funding 1.0 FTE combined Special Education Team Chair/Assistant Director – position filled within approved override funding
Salary Adjustments to Attract and Retain Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All contracts have been ratified – override funding allowed for higher Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's) for teachers and secretaries, additional stipends and tuition reimbursement for teachers and allowed for hiring of non-represented employees at competitive market rates.
Curriculum updates and renewals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending focused on RMHS science as well as science materials at the elementary schools.
Teacher training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several professional development programs have been completed with additional scheduled throughout the year. (AMC Math, Health PD, Literacy, Differentiated Instruction).
Classroom computer replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of computer carts for RMHS Science Department completed, working with technology department to obtain pricing and prioritize needs for remainder of spending.
Restore Athletics Schedule and Elementary Chorus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained athletics schedule. Elementary chorus positions are stipend positions within RTA contract – to date we not received any applications and as such the positions have not been filled.

Figure 2: Override Allocation By Cost Center in FY19 Budget

	Adjustments and Reconciling Items											Final FY19 School Budget	Total Change by Cost Center
	FY'19 School Committee Approved Budget	Salary Adjust.	Restore Teaching Positions	Curric. updates and renewals	Teacher Training / PD	Curric. Coord.	Computer Technician	Comp. Repl.	Special Ed Team Chair	Assist SPED Director	Restore Athletics Schedule and Chorus		
Administration	1,043,991	17,393	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,061,384	17,393
Regular Day	24,832,291	234,954	1,111,000	150,000	75,000	190,000	-	50,000	-	-	4,480	26,647,725	1,815,434
Special Education	13,693,652	86,167	-	-	-	-	-	-	49,250	70,000	-	13,899,069	205,417
School Facilities	1,316,122	9,098	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,325,220	9,098
District Wide Progra	1,836,969	12,388	-	-	-	-	57,000	-	-	-	20,520	1,926,877	89,908
	42,723,025	360,000	1,111,000	150,000	75,000	190,000	57,000	50,000	49,250	70,000	25,000	44,860,275	2,137,250

The Superintendent's Recommended FY20 budget, includes funding to primarily address the following financial drivers:

Kudos and Accolades

- A big thank you to the RMHS Alumni who shared with the seniors how RMHS has prepared them for their transition to college.
- Kudos to the boys hockey team for posting a win this week.

- Funding of all contractual step and COLA increases for represented (based upon successful negotiation of all contracts for 3-year period) and non-represented employees.
- Increase in known out of district special education tuition and transportation expenses due to increased rates, and types of placements.
- Curriculum Updates in Social Studies to align with new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- Increase in athletic, regular day mandatory, and homeless transportation per transportation contract and an increased number of homeless students.
- Anticipated increase in contractual cleaning services for RMHS (contract is in final year of 3-year agreement).
- Renewal of software programs and maintenance programs based on three-year renewal cycle and completion of capital projects.
- The net addition of 2.95 FTE Special Education Paraeducators, 3.5 FTE Special Education Teachers, 1.2 FTE Regular Education Teachers, and 0.6 FTE Districtwide Coach due to current and anticipated indistrict special education needs, programmatic needs and elementary enrollment needs. The breakdown is as follows:
 - 0.61 FTE Special Education Program Paraeducator at Birch Meadow (Hired in FY19)
 - 0.76 FTE Special Education Program Paraeducator at RISE (Hired in FY19)
 - 1.50 FTE Special Education Program Teacher at Coolidge (Hired in FY19)
 - 0.70 FTE Special Education Teacher at Wood End (Hired in FY19)
 - 0.30 FTE Special Education Teacher at Killam (Hired in FY19)
 - 0.43 FTE Special Education Paraeducator (Anticipated for FY20)
 - 0.30 FTE Special Education Paraeducator (Anticipated for FY20)
 - 0.85 FTE Special Education Program Paraeducator (Anticipated for FY20)
 - 1.0 FTE Special Education Program Teacher (Anticipated for FY20)
 - 1.2 FTE Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers at Killam and Wood End (Anticipated for FY20)
 - 0.60 FTE Behavioral Health Coach (Funded as a Community Priority for FY20). Position is currently funded in the School Climate Transformation grant which is ending this year.

In addition, we are closely monitoring our revolving accounts and are recommending the following adjustments to those accounts (see Figure 3) in the FY20 budget totaling a net overall increase of \$62,000. Refer to Figure 34 and 35 for a more detailed description of these accounts.

Figure 3: Revolving Account Offset Changes to Budget

Revolving Account	Change to Offset
Full Day Kindergarten	\$151,000
Athletics	\$20,000
Extended Day	\$15,000
RISE Pre-School	(\$50,000)
Use of School Property	(\$10,000)
Special Education Tuition	(\$68,000)
Extra-Curricular	(\$20,000)
Coolidge Extra-Curricular	\$12,000
Parker Extra-Curricular	<u>\$12,000</u>
Total Increase in Offsets	\$62,000

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

1/07 Superintendent's
Office
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

1/17 Wood End
7:15 – 8:15 a.m.

1/18 RMHS
7:00 – 8:00 a.m.

Not included in this budget are funds for potential settlements, unknown student placements and unanticipated enrollment increases or extraordinary special education costs related to out of district placement tuition, transportation, or other services as required by a student's individualized education plan. We are closely tracking additional potential cost increases throughout the remainder of the current fiscal year including legal, consultation and program costs that we anticipate may occur later in the year as decisions are made regarding individual students. These potential additional costs are not currently included in the Superintendent's Recommended FY20 budget as the timing and amounts are not known with certainty. As a result, we have made a conscious decision to budget less for out of district special education tuition and transportation than we normally would. We are having discussions with the Town Manager and the leadership of the Finance Committee of these potential increases. It is most likely we will need to ask for additional funding from April or November Town Meeting for FY19 and/or FY20 in this area.

In addition to the above financial drivers, the FY20 budget strives to help address our District Improvement Plan and other areas. During FY20 (2019-20 school year), we will begin a new District Improvement Plan which will most likely focus on some or all the following areas:

- Focus on equity and access for all students
- School Safety (Physical and Psychological)
- Closing the achievement gap
- Social Emotional Learning
- Addressing the capital needs (school security, educational, programmatic and athletic space) of our schools

This budget also prioritizes maintaining adequate class sizes of 18 to 22 students in kindergarten through Grade 2, maintaining the middle school interdisciplinary model, and addressing the results of the RMHS NEASC Self-study.

In Closing

In conclusion, we are grateful for the financial and community support that we have received and as a result, our district will be able to provide the necessary resources to stay focused on the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of our students. The Superintendent's Recommended FY20 budget reflects those priorities. While we are proud of the fact that we are a district that is on the forefront in many areas, we have challenges that lie ahead, including addressing the needs of our students with disabilities, educational space needs and improving the social and emotional well-being of our students. We are proud of the work that our teachers and administrators do every day to improve teaching and learning in our district. In addition, we have enthusiastic and respectful students who arrive to school every day eager to learn. This is a testament to our parents and our community who value the importance of education and the role that it needs to play in a community. There is no question that a major indicator of the quality of life for everyone in a community can be measured by the quality of its schools and by a community's commitment to its children. In this way, the quality of a school district affects every single person in a community, and the Town of Reading is no exception.

We appreciate the support that we have received from the community in the past and we look forward to working with the School Committee and town officials during this budget process.

Nature versus Nurture in Child Development

“Many children are able to thrive in any environment, while others may flourish only under the most favorable conditions,” says pediatrician/professor Thomas Boyce (University of California/San Francisco) in this article in *Psychology Today*. Early experiences with psychological trauma and adversity create obstacles to normal development and impair mental and physical health, says Boyce, but there’s variation in how children respond: “While some are powerfully affected by trauma, others are able to effectively weather adverse experiences, sustaining few, if any, developmental or health consequences.” Here are the two types:

- *Dandelion children* – About 80 percent of kids “show a kind of biological indifference to experiences of adversity,” says Boyce, “with stress response circuits in their brains that are minimally reactive to such events. Like dandelions that thrive in almost any environment, such children are mostly unperturbed by the stressors and traumas they confront.”

- *Orchid children* – About 20 percent “show an exceptional susceptibility to both negative and positive social contexts,” he says, “with stress response circuits highly sensitive to adverse events. Like orchids, which require very particular, supportive environments to thrive, these children show an exceptional capacity for succeeding in nurturant, supportive circumstances, but sustain a disproportionate number of illnesses and problems when raised in stressful, adverse social conditions.”

Why did orchid children survive over the course of human evolution? Boyce suggests that early hominid groups may have benefited from having a few individuals in their midst who were super-sensitive to impending attacks by animals or hostile rivals. Being an orchid “might also be of great benefit to those living at the other extreme,” he says, “in environments of exceptional safety, protection, and abundance. Here, the propensity of orchid children to be open and porous to environmental events and exposures would garner even greater advantages. Most children would thrive in such settings; orchids would thrive spectacularly.”

Dandelion/orchid differences are not entirely innate, says Boyce: they are the result of the interaction of genes and social contexts, with environmental cues regulating the expression of genetic differences. “Recognizing this differential susceptibility,” he says, “is an essential key to understanding the experiences of individual children, to parenting children of differing sensitivities and temperaments effectively, and to fostering the healthy, adaptive capacity of all young people.”

In a telling experiment, researchers measured the correlation between newborn babies’ Apgar scores in the first five minutes of life and teachers’ observations of the same children in kindergarten. On average, children with lower Apgar scores were less compliant with rules and instructions as five-year-olds and had more difficulty sitting still and focusing, less interest in books and reading, and more difficulty grasping and using a pencil. “At each lower step on the Apgar scale,” says Boyce, “such physical, social, emotional, language, and communication domains of development were all significantly more compromised five years later.”

Quote of the Week . . .



“The past should be the past. It can destroy the future. Live life for what tomorrow has to offer, not for what yesterday has taken away.”

-Unknown

But it's not all about genes, researchers have found; genetic characteristics create children's dispositions, but don't necessarily determine the outcomes. Children born with orchid-like genes who are raised in different environments – for example, those placed in cruel, negligent orphanages in 1980s Romania versus those welcomed into nurturing foster homes – had strikingly different outcomes: the latter recovered remarkably well from a bad start in terms of development and mental health. What's at work here is epigenetics – the new science of how the environment influences the expression of genes.

Boyce says there's an adage among pediatricians that all parents are environmental determinists until they have their own children, at which point they switch to believing that it's all about genes. Watching a child throwing a tantrum at the next table in a restaurant, a pre-child couple says it's clearly the parents' fault for not raising their child properly. But when the same couple is dealing with its own out-of-control child in a public place, “we hope that those around us understand that we've done our best, but the child came into the world with this temperament,” says Boyce. “It's far more comforting to ascribe the behavior of our own noisy or troubling toddler to genes, for which we have only passive responsibility, than to our capacities as parents, for which we are more directly accountable.”

The truth lies somewhere in the middle, he concludes: it's not either/or but rather both/and. “Every human disposition and disorder of mental or physical health depends on an intricate interaction between internal and external causes to take root and advance. The key to understanding human differences... will involve a keener knowledge of how genetic difference and environmental variation work together to change biological processes. This approach to ‘unpuzzling’ human nature and wellness brings us closer to understanding what makes orchids and dandelions bloom, wither, or move between these states over the course of a changing life... You can think of human life as the song that issues from the epigenetic piano and its equalizer, the result of a complex compositional process shaped by both genes and environments. Each person is predisposed to play certain types of scores, like those of the orchid or the dandelion, but there is abundant space for unique variation and improvisation.”

“Orchids and Dandelions” by Thomas Boyce in *Psychology Today*, January/February 2019 (Vol. 51, #1, p. 76-87), <https://bit.ly/2TistRB>; Boyce can be reached at Tom.Boyce@ucsf.edu; he is the author of *The Orchid and the Dandelion: Why Some Children Struggle and How All Can Thrive* (Knopf, 2019). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 767.

From the Office of Learning and Teaching

Many of our teaching staff have asked about offering another Reading site of the SEI (Sheltered English) Course. This course allows you to receive ENDORSEMENT in SEI as well as qualifies you with the 15 pdps in SEI that are required for certification. We plan to run another course this year at the RMHS Distance Learning Lab on the following dates provided we get 25 (Reading and possibly other districts) teachers to register.

Disney Quote of the Week



Below are the scheduled dates of the course.

WEEK 1	3 Hours	Monday, 2/4	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 2	3 Hours	Monday, 2/11	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 3	3 Hours	Monday, 2/25	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 4	3 Hours	Monday, 3/4	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 5	3 Hours	Monday, 3/11	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 6	2 Hours	Monday, 3/18	4:00-6:00pm
WEEK 7	3 Hours	Monday, 3/25	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 8	3 Hours	Monday, 4/1	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 9	3 Hours	Monday, 4/8	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 10	3 Hours	Monday, 4/22	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 11	3 Hours	Monday, 4/29	4:00-7:00pm
WEEK 12	3 Hours	Monday, 5/6	4:00-7:00pm
capstone 1	2 Hours	Monday, 5/13	4:00-6:00pm
capstone 2	2 Hours	Monday, 5/13	6:15-8:15pm
capstone 3	2 Hours	Tuesday, 5/14	4:00-6:00pm
capstone 4	2 hours	Tuesday, 5/14	6:15-8:15pm
Make Up 1	3 Hours	Monday, 5/6	4:00-7:00pm
Make Up 2	3 Hours	Monday, 5/13	4:00-7:00pm
Make up 3	3 Hours	Tuesday, 5/14	4:00-7:00pm

There is a 30 student limit for the course so please sign up ASAP to reserve your spot. The cost of the course is \$450 (Checks made payable to Town of Reading/Reading Public Schools), but it is tuition reimbursable as our district reimbursement fund allows according to the contract. In order to be reimbursed for the course you must fill out the **Tuition Reimbursement First Form** and return the form to Lori Miller in the Superintendent's Office prior to the start of the course. The form is attached to this email.

In addition, if you wish to receive graduate credit for the course, you will need to make a payment to American International College (AIC) for \$200, who is providing the credit and giving that to the instructor/SEEM once the course begins. SEEM will handle the graduate credit payment and administration of the credits with AIC. To receive this reimbursement you will need to complete another Tuition Reimbursement First Form for the credits of this course. Once you have successfully completed the course you will receive reimbursement as the fund allows according to the contract.

To sign up please contact Lori Miller at Lori.Miller@reading.k12.ma.us and provide to her your name, MEPID number and date of birth. Any questions you may have may also be directed to Lori Miller.

Best,

Chris Kelley,
Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching
Reading Public Schools

Important Websites

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

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

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

Stepping Stones...

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Gayle Robbins, Regular Education Tutor, Killam
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Special Education Learning Center Paraeducator, 61.5 hours biweekly, RMHS (Repost) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=642
Night Shift Custodian, 80 hours biweekly, Wood End Elementary School (Internal only. To view this job posting please login to your TalentEd account) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=643
1.0 FTE Interim Literacy (Reading) Specialist, Birch Meadow Elementary School (18-19) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=644

Blazing Trails...

"'Tis the Season for Ed Leadership Renewal." In this NASSP's #SchoolofThought blog, 2018 NASSP Digital Principal of the Year Brian McCann (@casehighprinc), Massachusetts Joseph Case High School Principal in Swansea, discusses the importance of leadership renewal and shares three ways to reconnect, recalibrate and renew. [Read More](#)

"The Struggle Is Real: How Difficult Work Strengthens Student Achievement." In a culture that promotes success and overlooks the inevitability of pitfalls, it's not hard for students to develop a fear of failure and patterns of self-defeatist thinking, writes Matt Johnson. But when they have the knowledge to overcome mental hurdles, they will learn and grow in meaningful ways. Use mistakes and failures as feedback to improve students' thinking over time. [Read More](#)

"Trauma Awareness Guides Berkshires Elementary School." Students tap a number on a "mood scale" to reflect their emotional status when they enter a classroom at a Massachusetts school that has devoted itself to being trauma-informed. "If you're three or above, you need to seek help from an adult," said Principal Kate Retzel of Lee Elementary School in Lee, Mass. [Read More](#)

"What 60 Schools Can Tell Us About Teaching 21st Century Skills: Grant Lichtman at TEDxDenverTeachers.'" The rate of change in the world demands that we re-imagine and restructure the foundational learning relationship among students, teachers, and knowledge. In September 2012, pursuing a decades-long passion for transformational education, Grant packed up his Prius and set off on a solo, nationwide research tour to discover what schools are doing to prepare students for an evolving future. Find out what he learned from three months on the road visiting 21 states, 64 schools, and the great ideas of 500 educators. Presented by Grant Lichtman, Author and Educational Consultant. [Read More](#)

"How Google's Former China Chief Thinks AI Will Reshape the Future of Education." Kai-Fu Lee, a venture capitalist and former president of Google China, says artificial intelligence will change how students learn in the future. In this interview, he describes how AI can support teachers in the classroom and he outlines an approach backed in China that uses technology to have expert educators teach 1,000 students at a time. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!