



Pathways

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

February 10, 2018

Volume 6, Number 21

Upcoming Dates

- February 12 – (6:30 p.m.)
RMHS Future Freshman
Night in the Endslo PAC
- February 13 – Grade 6 – 12
Early Release
- February 18 – Presidents
Day – No School/Offices
Closed
- February 19 – 22 – February
Vacation- No School/Offices
Open
- February 28 – (2:30 p.m.)
Middle School Math Meet at
Wilmington

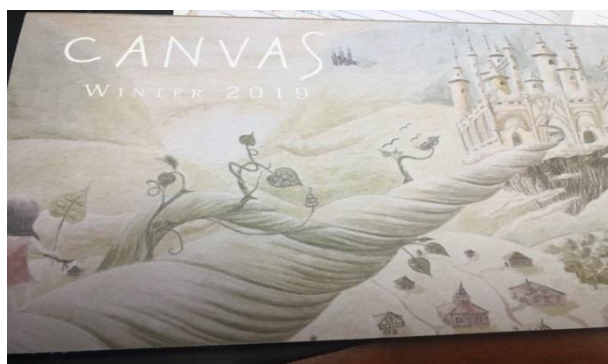
RMHS Senior Becomes Published Author



Aymon Langlois

Recently, RMHS Senior Aymon Langlois became a published author when the short story, “Her Story” was recently published in the Teen Literary Magazine, Canvas, Winter 2019 edition. Canvas is a quarterly publication that showcases outstanding teen writing. Aymon was interested in submitting the work after working with Miss Crosby in Honors Story Writing and having this piece published at RMHS.

Below is an excerpt from the short story. Congratulations to Aymon and to RMHS English Teacher Kate Crosby for her work as a teacher.



Kudos and Accolades

- Kudos to the gymnastics, boys & girls hockey, wrestling, & girls & boys basketball teams for posting a win recently.
- Kudo to the swim team for a strong third place finish in the League Meet.
- Kudos to the boys and girls track teams for strong showing at the League Meet.

Jerry (September 10th - 6:30 A.M.)

Suddenly, out of darkness, there was light. Suddenly, out of silence, there was sound. The tepid morning sun, just beginning to show its naked self, provided a dim brownish light. The sound, of course, came from Jerry's alarm clock—the shrill electronic buzz permeating their apartment. As Jerry looked over at his wife, Jody, lying next to him, it occurred to him that he should silence the alarm, lest Jody awaken to “such a racket,” as she had called it so many times before. Jerry considered himself a fortunate man. After fifteen years, he was still in love with the woman he had married. That being said, Jody could be difficult. For one thing, she didn't like waking up to the piercing sound of an alarm clock. He pondered that fact as he arose from their bed and began his walk downstairs. Wasn't that what alarm clocks were for? Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Jerry stumbled. Looking down at the floor where he had tripped, he realized that lying there was the culprit: a book, one of Jody's books. Yes, for two, there were her books—so many books.

Upcoming SEPAC Meeting

Please join us next Tuesday for an opportunity to learn more about Special Ed in Reading, meet district staff, and connect with other parents! This is a great opportunity for new families, so if you know of anybody that is new to Special Ed, please pass along this info!

Tuesday, February 12th, 7pm
RMHS Library Media Center
Special Ed "Meet and Greet"

Learn more about Special Ed in Reading, introduction to district staff, and the opportunity to meet and network with your team chair and others from your school!

Thank you,

Chair
SEPAC BOARD
[SEPAC WEBPAGE](#)

The Teenage Brain: Risky or Ready to Learn?

Posted by Erin Walsh • January 30 on [Dr. Dave-Mind Positive Parenting](#)

“What is wrong with me?”

This was not an infrequent refrain when I was a teenager. I am sure that some of my behavior (e.g. So. Much. Crying.) wasn't easy to understand. The transition from happiness to complete despair during my adolescence sometimes clocked in at about 2 seconds,

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

2/13 Killam
12:30-1:30 p.m.

2/15 Wood End
7:30-8:30 a.m.

abrupt to say the least. No doubt this was disorienting to my parents on the outside, but it was confusing to me on the inside as well.

My mom's consistent gentle response meant the world to me: "There is nothing wrong with you sweetie. These feelings are completely normal." That's not to say that I was able to wipe my eyes and give my mom a proper and well-articulated "Thank you" at the time. Instead, I likely responded only with a louder wail followed by an indignant "You don't understand!" Yet on some deeper level her quiet confidence was bedrock during a time of great upheaval.

Growing up is hard. I needed grown ups around me who believed I could do hard things, especially when I doubted that I could.

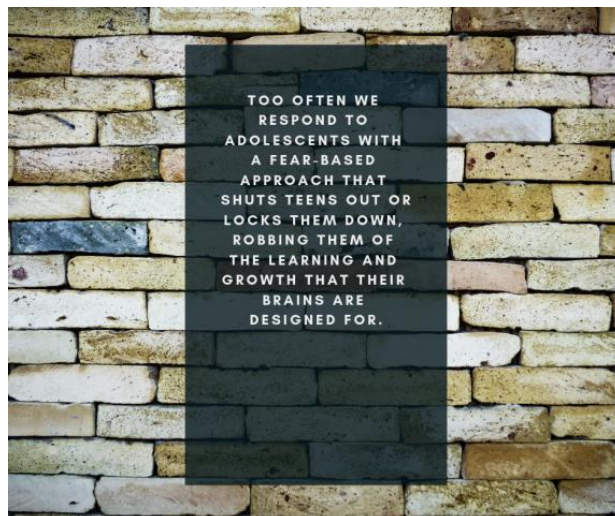
Every story has a lesson

This is why I am both passionate about and careful around the science of the adolescent brain. On one hand, the science helps normalize a particularly rocky time. How comforting to know that the chemical serotonin was part of the wellspring of the rivers of tears I was drowning in!

On the other hand, the same science can inadvertently marginalize youth if we aren't careful. For example, I love the folksy and now-famous story of Phineus Gage because it led to our current understanding of just how powerful and important the part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex (PFC) is. We included the story again in the latest edition of *Why Do They Act That Way?* because it provides a clear story anchor for our understanding of the PFC.

But every story has a lesson, and we should be mindful of the conclusions that we draw from it. For example, as the story goes, after Phineus Gage sustained extreme trauma to his prefrontal cortex, he wandered around the country, unable to keep a job, before dying alone in California. This is not necessarily an empowering tale for a sobbing teenager.

The good news is that children do not sustain these kinds of life-threatening brain injuries as a routine part of development when they hit adolescence. Yet news headlines almost make you think they do: "Watch Out! Teens Are Risky Business" and "Why Teenagers Act Crazy!" Kids are clearly absorbing these messages. One young person asked me before a workshop, "Is it true that our brains are broken during middle school?" You get the point.



How might we interpret the science differently?

The last region of the brain to finish developing *is* the part of our brain that helps us plan ahead, consider risk and reward, regulate emotions, and control impulses. This is why many teens need extra practice and support during adolescence. At the same time, the reward pathways in the adolescent brain *are* on overdrive. So dopamine-producing activities like hanging out with friends and taking risks feel that much better during adolescence. This “mismatch” between the brakes and the gas helps account for some of the challenging and risky behaviors associated with this developmental stage. Yet the near wholesale focus on the *challenges* has obscured one of the main insights from the latest science: the adolescent brain is primed for learning.

The lesson: Invite young people in

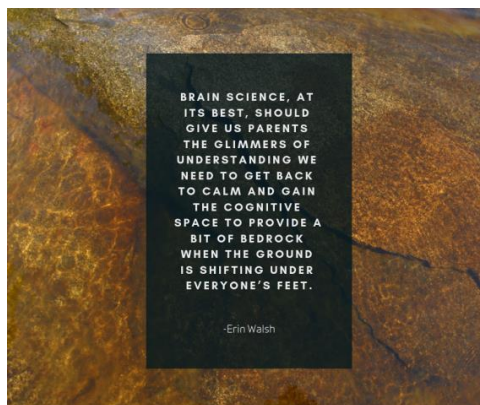
The plasticity and change that can make adolescence challenging also create a “window of opportunity” for learning and growth. The experiences that young people have during the growth spurts of their brain have a greater impact than ever again in their lives. Research even shows that the teenage brain shows more communication between the striatum (where we seek rewards) and the hippocampus (where we store memories) than adult brains do.

This just means that we are more likely to form more strong and specific memories during adolescence as we get out and explore the world. Neuroscientist Dr. Laurence Steinberg argues that this is exactly why we should engage youth in learning and leadership experiences that have the potential to “stick” during this developmental window.

This challenges the dominant model of adolescence as a time to be endured, policed, and monitored as young people move through a minefield of risk. Too often we respond to adolescents with a fear-based approach that shuts teens out or locks them down, robbing them of the learning and growth that their brains are designed for. This is especially true for black, Indigenous and youth of color who are rarely allowed the same freedom to explore and aren’t granted the presumption of developmental innocence that their white counterparts benefit from.

The latest brain science actually demands the opposite – *that we invite all adolescents in*. This is the time to provide meaningful opportunities for teens to ignite the amped up reward pathways in their brains through engaged learning and leadership.

It’s also a reminder that we should be grateful that their brains are wired this way because it helps them do the riskiest thing of all – grow up.



Quote of the Week . . .



“A good life is when you smile often, dream big, laugh a lot and realize how blessed you are for what you have.”

-Unknown

There is nothing wrong with you.

On the outside, many teenagers only show adults hardened armor as they take on the challenge of becoming an adult. But inside, many teenagers have the same internal script that I had: “What is wrong with me?”

They don’t need adults helping them rehearse that line.

Now for some real talk. I am a parent of two children. My almost eight-year-old has perfected his eye roll in early elementary school. On the younger end, my four-year-old would rather spend some days in his unicorn sleeping bag than leave our house. Believe me that by my fourth attempt to get my youngest to put on his pants this morning, I wondered “What is wrong with him?”

As parents, there are many times when we would like to scream this statement. But I like to think that this is what pillows and friends are for. This is also when I am most grateful for my tired but wired prefrontal cortex, enabling me to take a deep breath and remember that these behaviors are developmentally appropriate and right on time.

Brain science, at its best, should give us parents the glimmers of understanding we need get back to calm and gain the cognitive space to be bit of bedrock when the ground is shifting under everyone’s feet. To turn towards our children and be able to say, “Having feelings is completely normal.”

It turns out that their brains are exquisitely wired to receive this kind of learning.

And at the end of the day, though parenting might be hard, we are adults and we can do hard things.

DO:

Name strengths. This isn’t showering them with empty praise, it is about being clear and specific about the strengths that your child brings to the world (especially when things are challenging). Give them opportunities to name their own strengths.

Invite teens in. Be wary of “tokenism” and “decoration” and instead plug your teen into organizations and activities where young people are given agency and power. Check out this ladder of youth engagement to get a sense of what is possible:

(<https://www.nacac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ladder-of-Youth-Engagement.pdf>)

Support positive risk taking. Getting up in front of your school to talk about bullying is a risky thing, in the best way. Create opportunities for risk taking that results in positive and productive learning.

Keep playing. Engaging the learning brain isn’t just about focusing on transcripts and college entrance exams. Young people still benefit from hands on experience, tinkering, experimenting, downtime, and play.

Pay attention to sleep. While teens are asleep, their brains are busily “house cleaning” inside the brain, getting rid of unnecessary connections and cementing important ones. Without this, the learning power of the teenage brain is diminished.

Disney Quote of the Week



"Somehow I can't believe that there are any heights that can't be scaled by a person who knows the secrets of making dreams come true. This special secret, it seems to me, can be summarized in four C's. They are curiosity, confidence, courage, and constancy."

— Walt Disney

Get your teen moving. Exercise is like "miracle grow" for the prefrontal cortex, apply liberally.

DON'T:

Use brain science to marginalize teens. Excluding teens from leadership or downplaying their ability to contribute robs them of practice and learning. It also robs adults of opportunities to learn from the ideas, energy, and wisdom of youth.

Ignore the power of peers. Social reflection, collaboration, and teamwork are the glue of new learning during adolescence. Groups of teens are not scary, they are powerful.

Hide the research. Teach teenagers about their own brains. Learning that their brains *are growing* can boost performance: <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>

Ignore mental health issues. While ups and downs are a normal part of adolescence, don't ignore **signs of more serious mental health issues.**

Notes:

Casey, B. J., Jones, R. M., & Hare, T. A. (2008). The adolescent brain. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1124, 111-26.

Ibid.

Galvan, A. (2010). Adolescent development of the reward system. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 4, 6.

Peters, S. & Crone, E.A. (2017). Increased striatal activity in adolescence benefits learning. *Nature Communication*. 8, 1983.

Steinberg, L. (2015). *Age of Opportunity: New Lessons from the Science of Adolescence*. Houghton-Mifflin. New York: NY.

Carskadon, M. (2011). Sleep in adolescents: the perfect storm. *Pediatric clinics of North America*, 58(3), 637-47.

Verburgh L, Königs M, Scherder EJA, et al. (2014). Physical exercise and executive functions in preadolescent children, adolescents and young adults: a meta-analysis. *Br J Sports Med*. 48:973-979.

Dahl, R., Allen, N., Wilbrecht, L., & Suleiman, A. (2018). Importance of investing in adolescence from a developmental science perspective. *Nature*. 554, 441.



Important Websites

[RPS District Website](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us)
www.reading.k12.ma.us

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

1. Did You Know?: Black History Month Resources

February is Black History Month, and the [Supplement to the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework \(download\)](#), available on the [frameworks page](#) of the DESE website, lists a wide range of African-American history resources starting on page 31. The links include entities like the [digital collections of the Library of Congress](#) and primary sources like the [first anti-slavery tract published in New England](#).

2. Teacher Reflection: Listening for Students' Messages

The Council of Chief State School Officers and NWEA recorded a [podcast series with the 2018 Teachers of the Year](#) from each state. For her podcast, [2018 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Cara Pekarck](#) reflected on what might be behind a high school student's behavior.

3. FYI: National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Programs

The National Endowment for the Humanities funds [tuition-free summer programs](#) across the country for K-12 educators and higher education faculty. The program last one to four weeks, and participants receive stipends to help cover travel and living expenses. The deadline for applications is **March 1**.

**Please join us for a FREE workshop open to
the Reading Community.**

Talking to Our Kids About Inclusion

A workshop with Theresa Wiggins of Village Parenting

Wondering what you can do in response to the vandalism happening in our community? This workshop will explore having conversations with our children about inclusion. Come find out why having these conversations is important and leave with some practical ideas of how you can do it. Whether you are new to this topic or have made this a practice for a while, there is something for everyone.

Location: J.W. Killam Elementary School

Date and Time: Monday, March 4, 6:30-8:00 pm



As the founder of Village Parenting, Theresa Wiggins is a parent educator and mindfulness teacher. She believes that the best way to raise our youth is to do it together. Theresa and her husband are raising three kids and live here in 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

Reading Public Schools 2nd Annual

PARENT UNIVERSITY

2019 Theme - "Raising Healthy and Happy Children"

WHEN

Saturday, March 30th
8:00am – 12:30pm

WHERE

**Reading Memorial High School, 62
Oakland Road**

**Benefit from FREE workshops presented by community experts
on a variety of topics.**

**FREE childcare for children in grades K through 5 will be
provided by the Extended Day Program. You must pre-register
for childcare when you are registering for Parent University
workshops.**

**Pre-registration will begin on Monday, March 11th at the
following link:**

**[https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/adult-and-
community-education/](https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/adult-and-community-education/)**

Sponsored By



Reading Education Foundation
Outside the box ~ Inside the classroom.

Tentative Schedule

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
SHAUNA TOMINEY,
PH.D.

PRESENTS:

**"Raising Healthy and
Happy Children"**

8:40am – 9:40am

Performing Arts Center

**Workshop Sessions
Include:**

**Managing the Ups and
Downs of Children's
Emotional Lives**

**Demystifying College Cost
& The Financial Aid Process**

Intentional Parenting

Vaping

**Collaborative & Proactive
Solutions**

**College Process:
Roundtable Discussion
with Parents**

**Intro to Mental Health First
Aid**

No One Called You A Racist

And more.....

Reading Public School Happenings

RMHS High Five For This Week

Below are the RMHS High Fives for this week.

Ryan Norton, Class of 2019

Ryan Norton is recognized for being a positive, kind, and highly accomplished member of the RMHS Class of 2019. Ryan has an excellent academic record that reflects a strong commitment to his work during the school day. His favorite class at the moment is Ms. Crosby's Honors Storywriting class. Ms. Richardson, Ryan's poetry teacher from first semester, has had the pleasure of working with Ryan in several different capacities. Ms. Richardson says, "I've had Ryan for four years - as a freshman in Advisory, as a sophomore in English 10, as a senior in Honors Poetry, and all four years in The Playwriting Club. Whether he was writing an essay about poet Mary Oliver's work, a sonnet about social issues, or a one act play examining relationships, Ryan cares about writing. Ryan has written, directed, and acted in multiple one act plays for the student playwriting showcase at RMHS all four years. For the past two years in a row, the artistic director of Boston Playwrights' Theatre has chosen Ryan's one act play to be put on at BPT with equity

directors and actors. It is rare to be honored with this accolade once let alone two times in one's high school career, and it is a true testament to Ryan's talent in crafting a story that resonates with people." Ms. Richardson also gives Ryan the highest praise for what he does to make the classroom environment a welcoming and fun one. Ryan has been an active participant in the vocal music and dramatic arts offerings at RMHS since his freshman year. This year he is a leader among our students by serving as the secretary and librarian of the Mixed Choir. Miss Killian describes Ryan as a joy to work with in the chorus room. In that space Ryan has honed his voice, musicianship, and confidence to levels that have earned him recognition outside of RMHS. For example, he auditioned for and was accepted to the Northeast Senior District Music Festival, and he participated in the Mass ACDA Chorus Festival at UMass Amherst where he performed in an ensemble that presented Schubert's Mass in G. Ryan plans to study musical theater performance in college, which is no surprise given the time and energy he has spent on the boards of the Endslow Performing Arts Center. His four years in the RMHS Drama Club have been full of great memories and packed houses. Ryan offered memorable performances in two fall musicals: last year, he was The Leading Player in Pippin; and, this past November, he was Sky in Mamma Mia! One of Ryan's final roles in the RMHS Drama Club will be one of his most ambitious and rewarding roles. This very weekend, the curtain will rise on the RMHS production of Selfie, with Ryan serving as the director. This is the culmination of a long process that began with Ryan writing a proposal, refining his vision with Ms. Cunha, and ultimately working with mentor Ms. Katie Donovan to bring the play to life. We wish him and his cast and crew the best of luck this weekend, and we encourage all of you to attend Selfie and maybe give Ryan a well-deserved high five after the show.



RISE Global Play Day

Last week, RISE students engaged in Global Play Day activities. Below are some pictures for this outstanding learning experience.



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go out to Killam teacher **Tonia McGuire** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to former Wood End teacher/paraeducator **Catherine Horan** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to District BCBA **Shelley Aiello (Mitropoulos)** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to RMHS teacher **Sue Gilbert** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to Coolidge secretary **Marianna Zanni** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to Killam paraeducator **Denise Iozzo** who lost a loved one recently.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Jeffrey Beaulieu, Night Shift Custodian, Wood End
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Long Term Substitute Special Education Program Teacher, Birch Meadow 18-19 (Repost) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=668
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1:1 Special Education Program Paraeducator, 52 hours biweekly, RISE Preschool https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=669

Special Education Program Paraeducator (one-year), 52 hours biweekly, RISE Preschool https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=670

0.8 FTE Stepping Stone Transition Program Academic Coordinator, Reading Memorial High School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=671

Extended School Year Speech-Language Pathologist https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=672

Extended School Year Special Education Teacher https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=673

Extended School Year Occupational Therapist/COTA https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=674

Extended School Year School Psychologist/Adjustment Counselor https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=675
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Extended School Year Physical Therapist/PTA https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=676
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Extended School Year Special Education Paraeducator https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=677
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Town Openings

Clerk – Elder Human Services https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/2019_clerk_-_elder_human_services.pdf

Blazing Trails...

"When The Principal Cancels School ... With A Song-And-Dance Number." School leaders, including Mr. Brian McCann from Case High School in Swansea, Massachusetts, are announcing inclement weather closures in more creative ways, including through posting humorous videos online. In one video that has been viewed more than 700,000 times, a Michigan superintendent and a school principal announce a snow day because of the polar vortex with a rendition of the song "Hallelujah." [Read More](#)

"What Kind of Educator Are You?" Michele Hill and Paul Berardelli are a classroom teacher and school administrator who share their advice and expertise with the ASCD Inservice blog audience in a monthly column. This month, they tackle the question, "Are you the educator you needed when you were a student?". [Read More](#)

"Do ELLs Benefit from Repeating 3rd Grade?" English-language learners in Florida who were held back in the third grade became proficient in English in about half the time than their peers who advanced to the fourth grade, according to a working paper released by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Researchers studied 40,000 students in several Florida school districts and found that retained students were less likely to take remedial English courses later and more likely to take advanced math or science courses in middle school. [Read More](#)

"Asian-American College Students have Highest Amount of Unmet Financial Need, Study Finds." "Nearly three in four students overall had unmet financial need, a 23 percent increase compared to the 2011-12 school year. At four-year public universities, 75 percent of all students had unmet need, compared to 79 percent of Asian-American students." [Read More](#)

"A Framework for Leading Schools in a Diverse, Interconnected World." Educational leaders play a crucial role in creating and cultivating the school environments that facilitate global teaching and learning. This white paper, from ASCD and the Longview Foundation, identifies seven tenets of leading global learning and clear actions school leaders can take to develop and implement each of the tenets, including case study examples, suggested activities and additional resources. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!