



Pathways

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

October 18, 2019

Volume 7, Number 5

Upcoming Dates

- October 19 – (8:00 a.m.)
PSAT Testing @ RMHS
- October 23 – Grade 6 – 12
Early Release; (6:30 p.m.)
RMHS Guidance Freshman
Parent Night in Endslo PAC
- November 5 – Full Day In-
Service – No School for
Students; (6:30 p.m.) Fine &
Performing Arts College Fair
@ Emmanuel College
- November 7 – (7:00 p.m.)
School Committee in the
Schettini Library
- November 8 – (7:30 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC
- November 9 – (7:30 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC
- November 10 – (3:00 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC
- November 11 – Veterans
Day – Schools and Offices
Closed
- November 12 – (7:30 p.m.)
Town Meeting in the
Endslo PAC
- November 14 – (7:30 p.m.)
Town Meeting in the
Endslo PAC
- November 15 – (7:30 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC
- November 16 – (7:30 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC
- November 17 – (3:00 p.m.)
RMHS Musical in the
Endslo PAC

Fall Update from Office of Learning and Teaching

October 2019

RPS COMMUNITY FALL UPDATE

FROM THE OFFICE OF LEARNING & TEACHING

In this issue:

- METCO director
- Curriculum Guides
- Elementary Report Cards
- STEM Week events

Did you know?

- Joshua Eaton is part of a DESE grant to pilot dyslexia screening tools.
- Many RPS educators were involved in professional work over the summer—including Middle School Math and Social Studies curriculum, elementary reading workshop, and the Heinemann Teacher Tour to name just a few.
- A district MCAS Summary Information sheet can be found on the learning and teaching website.

METCO Director Hightower

Grant Hightower, our new METCO Director, has been acclimating well to the district by meeting with principals, teachers, and students to begin the relationship building process. The students have articulated a feeling of belonging, but want more opportunities to lead in the classroom and social groups. This has prompted the formation of a peer leadership team at the High School. The group called the Network, plans to pair students of color in different grades to build affinity, bring in resident allies, and begin an action plan for both racial and social awareness and action. Grant is also working with district staff to develop professional development opportunities that will lead to adaptive change that can be brought to Reading. Our vision is truly one of creating a more transformational learning community.

Curriculum Guides

- Curriculum Guides are up! Check out our High School guides and grades K-5 (Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and SEL) published and our website: <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/learning-teaching/>
- Curriculum guide work in preschool, elementary Social Studies, grades 6-8 and other High School courses are in the works for the 2019-20 school year. Check out the new Massachusetts History and Social Science Standards that were published last year. They can be found here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/2018-12.pdf>
- The Department of Education also published new standards that were unanimously adopted in June 2019 for the Arts (which include art, music and theatre). More information regarding these changes can be found here: t.ly/3nomy

Elementary Report Cards are Changing

Last year, members of the Elementary Report Card team met to revise elementary report cards. A plan for revisions over a two year period was developed. This school year (2019-2020) will include some changes including a modified timeline that allows for students in grades one through five to receive a fall report card that will be reviewed during fall conferences. In Kindergarten, students will not receive a fall report card but will have a goal setting meeting. Further, updates and revisions were made to both indicators for behaviors that support learning as well as the end of the year performance standards. The team also added new indicators for Art, Library/Media, Music, PE/Health and Library/Media. More information will be available soon with current report cards updates as well as ways to provide feedback as the committee continues with planning for the 2019-2020 school year. Thank you to members of the Committee: Chris Kelley/Beth Leavitt, Co-Chairs, Jessica Bruno, Katie Cole, Lauren Fusco, Allison Kramer, Sarah Lanzo, Miriam Lewis, Lynda Michel, Arielle Mucha, Tammy Murzyki, Kathy Santilli, Anne Manna, and Nancy Walcott.

STEM Week

READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STEM WEEK EVENTS
AT READING PUBLIC LIBRARY

STEM Week – See Yourself in STEM Monday, October 21st 5-8:30 P.M.
Come enjoy hands-on experiences in STEM including digging into some old pipes, playing with shapes and geometry, completing an engineering design challenge, exploring magnets and light, programming robots, and more!

STEM Week – CODING! Thursday, October 24th 3-15:43:30 P.M.
Curiosity, members of all ages and experiences are invited to join us to try their hands at coding, coding programs, codable robots, and even "unplugged" coding activities will be available.

Questions? Please reach out to Heather Leonard, Reading Public Schools STEM Curriculum Coordinator heather@leonard@reading.k12.ma.us @STEM@Reading

Reading Public Schools Announces New Director of School Nutrition

Chief Financial Officer Gail Dowd is pleased to announce that Danielle Collins has been appointed as the new Director of School Nutrition. Danielle brings a wealth of knowledge from two previous school districts including most recently as the Director of School Nutrition for the Methuen Public Schools and previously as the School Nutrition Director for the Chelmsford Public Schools. Danielle will be a splitting her time with us and the Town of Wakefield which has been our practice for the last several years.

Please welcome Danielle to the Reading Public Schools!

Superintendent Office Hours Continue This Week

Starting this week, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty will begin to hold office hours at the different schools. Superintendent Office Hours will be scheduled for 30 minutes and are open to all members of the community and staff. The purpose of office hours is for staff and community members to discuss any topics related to the Reading Public Schools with the Superintendent. We will try to schedule two office hours per week.

The next three week's office hours are as follows:

10/21 7:30 a.m. Parker
10/25 7:45 a.m. Birch Meadow
10/28 2:30 p.m. Killam
10/29 2:30 p.m. Barrows

No appointment is necessary. If you are attending an office hour, please go to the Main Office of the school that is holding the office hour.

If you cannot make one of the advertised office hour times and you would like to schedule an appointment with Dr. Doherty, feel free to call the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices at 781-944-5800 or contact Linda Engelson at linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us.

Reading Education Foundation 2020 Grant Cycle Now Open

Reading Education Foundation 2020 Grant Cycle is now open!

Application Deadline for District Office Submission is January 11, 2020. Each principal will have earlier internal deadlines for review and signature. Awards announced March-April 2019.

See REF website at readingef.org for more information about the grant process, guidelines, and application.

Please contact REF with any questions at readingef@gmail.com

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to boys & girls soccer, golf, field hockey, football, boys cross country, and volleyball for wins this week.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Marching Band on a gold medal performance at last week's competition in Wakefield.
- Congratulations to the volleyball team for qualifying for the MIAA Tournament.

**MASS
STEM
WEEK**
OCT 21-25, 2019

**READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STEM WEEK EVENTS
AT READING PUBLIC LIBRARY**



See Yourself In STEM

Monday, October 21st 5-6:30 P.M.

Come enjoy hands-on experiences in STEM including:

- » digging into some owl puke
- » playing with shapes and geometry
- » completing an engineering design challenge
- » exploring magnets and light
- » programming robots

...and more!

CODING!

Thursday, October 24th 3:15-4:30 P.M.

Community members of all ages and experiences are invited to join us to try their hands at coding.

Coding programs, codable robots, and even "unplugged" coding activities will be available.



STEM Nexus

Connecting the Massachusetts STEM Community

<https://www.massstemweek.org/>

These activities are designed for collaborative hands-on engagement. Children should attend with adult supervision. Questions? Please reach out to Heather Leonard, Reading Public Schools STEM Curriculum Coordinator heather.leonard@reading.k12.ma.us @STEMReading

FRIENDS OF READING METCO
invites

**ALL Reading Public Schools
families to**

**FAMILY
DINNER IN
BOSTON!**

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

**SATURDAY
NOV 02
4-6PM**



Superintendent's Office
Half-Hours this Week

All are welcome

10/21 7:30 a.m. Parker

10/25 7:45 a.m. Birch
Meadow

10/28 2:30 p.m. Killam

10/29 2:30 p.m.
Barrows

READING, MA

TOWN MEETING 101

Monday, November 4th, 7pm

Library Community Room

All are welcome to come and learn about Town Meeting's role in our town Government & what happens before and during Town meeting!

Town Meeting members and our Town Moderator, Alan Foulds, will be available for questions after the presentation.

Questions?

Email Jen Hillery | jenniferchillery@gmail.com

Preventing School Shootings

In this article in *Education Week*, Jillian Peterson (Hamline University/St. Paul) and James Densley (Metropolitan State University/St. Paul), both leaders of The Violence Project, say there is a \$3 billion industry focused on protecting students and educators from mass shootings: reconfiguring school architecture, classroom locks, security cameras with facial recognition, safe rooms, bulletproof windows, Kevlar backpack inserts, and lockdown drills. "There is no evidence that any of this stuff works," say Peterson and Densley. "All we do know is that the search for school safety solutions is sending districts into more debt and hurting school climate." More than half of U.S. teens worry about a shooting in their school, even though the chance of that happening is roughly one in 614 million.

Peterson and Densley spent two years looking for a better approach. Under a grant from the National Institute of Justice, they studied the life histories of mass shooters back to 1966 and all school shootings starting with Columbine. They also interviewed incarcerated school shooters, their families, students who planned violence but changed their minds, survivors, teachers, administrators, and first responders. They combed through media and social media, suicide notes and manifestos written by perpetrators, trial transcripts, and medical records. The researchers found that although there isn't a single profile or predictor of violence, school shooters shared these characteristics:

- 98 percent were male.
- They were almost always a student in the school.

- They were angry or despondent over a recent event, resulting in suicidal feelings.
- They expected to die in the act, so their plans were suicidal.
- They suffered early-childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age.
- They studied other school shootings, often online, and found “inspiration.”
- They had access to weapons to carry out an attack; in 80 percent of cases, guns belonged to family members, most often parents and grandparents.

These common factors, say Peterson and Densley, suggest strategies to prevent school shootings from happening in the first place:

- Mitigate childhood trauma through school-based mental health services provided by counselors and social workers.
- Implement curriculum units on positive coping skills, resilience, and social-emotional learning, especially for young boys.
- Be alert to signals of trouble: “In 80 percent of cases,” say the researchers, “school shooters communicated to others that they were in crisis, whether through a marked change in behavior, an expression of suicidal thoughts or plans, or specific threats of violence.” All school staff need training on picking up signs, and everyone should have access to a system for anonymously reporting a student in crisis.
- When a student makes a threat or shares a plan, that’s a *de facto* suicide note and should be treated as a cry for help. “By unduly punishing or criminalizing students making threats,” say Peterson and Densley, “schools pile on stress and exacerbate any grievance... Schools need care teams dynamic enough to see opportunities to connect students with needed resources and safeguard them in a wraparound process.” In interviews with students who planned an attack and changed their mind, the reason was always that an adult reached out and provided hope.
- Schools need media literacy curriculum units to help students more critically assess what’s on the Internet and see through extremist propaganda.
- Lockdown/active shooter drills “send the message that violence is normal, when it’s not,” say Peterson and Densley. What’s more, drills may teach potential shooters (who may be taking part as students) what security measures are planned, providing guidance for working around them. “All adults in the school should be trained in active-shooter response, but schools can stop spreading the script of mass violence by protecting their students from these drills.”
- Schools need to send a strong message to families on the importance of securing all firearms in the home.

“Why School Shootings Happen” by Jillian Peterson and James Densley in *Education Week*, October 9, 2019 (Vol. 39, #8, p. 20), <https://bit.ly/2IOD6sG>; the authors can be reached at jpetereson68@hamline.edu and james.densley@metrostate.edu. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 806.

Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies

By: Jessica Minahan for Educational Leadership

Small changes in classroom interactions can make a big difference for traumatized students.

Quote of the Week . . .



“Let us make our future now, and let us make our dreams tomorrow’s reality.”

—Malala Yousafzai

Up to two-thirds of U.S. children have experienced at least one type of serious childhood trauma, such as abuse, neglect, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence. Trauma is possibly the largest public health issue facing our children today (CDC, 2019). Traumatized students are especially prone to difficulty in self-regulation, negative thinking, being on high alert, difficulty trusting adults, and inappropriate social interactions (Lacoe, 2013; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). They often haven't learned to express emotions healthily and instead show their distress through aggression, avoidance, shutting down, or other off-putting behaviors. These actions can feel antagonistic to teachers who don't understand the root cause of the student's behavior, which can lead to misunderstandings, ineffective interventions, and missed learning time.

Neurobiologically, students can't learn if they don't feel safe, known, and cared for within their schools (Aupperle et al., 2012). When teachers are proactive and responsive to the needs of students suffering from traumatic stress and make small changes in the classroom that foster a feeling of safety, it makes a huge difference in their ability to learn. Here are some examples.

1. Expect Unexpected Responses

First, teachers must learn to put students' reactions into context—and not to take them personally. Students with trauma histories can react and behave in seemingly unexpected ways, such as having a sudden outburst during a favorite activity or crying out of the blue one second after laughing. Teachers may be taken by surprise. They say things like, "But he was fine this morning, I didn't see that coming!" or "She normally loves playing the drums in music class. I have no idea where her reaction came from." This uncertainty leaves the teacher in a constant state of hyper-alertness when interacting with the student. This in turn can result in fatigue, as the teacher is guarded and unable to predict what will happen from one moment to another.

One way to understand these reactions is to think of the student as a soda can, and events that may trigger their trauma stress as shaking that can. We can't tell by looking if the can was recently shaken, but if it was, opening the can results in an unexpected explosive, messy reaction. If a student is triggered and experiencing heightened emotion, even a benign direction such as, "Please move over to make room for Jenny" could result in an "explosion" that the teacher never saw coming. By using trauma-sensitive strategies in the classroom, we can help reduce the times our students are "shaken."

2. Employ Thoughtful Interactions

Traumatized students often behave in ways that may interfere with teaching and learning, which can be frustrating. Teachers are in a position of power, and these students may be overly defensive, anticipating adult criticism, or defiant, as a way to assert control (Jennings, 2018). Yet for traumatized students, the ability to learn and behave appropriately can be person-dependent. When they are with a safe and supportive adult, their behavior reflects that.

Consider this scenario drawn from schools I've worked with: Trevor, a 6th grader whose father overdosed on heroin two years ago and who has witnessed ongoing domestic abuse throughout his childhood, was in Ms. Carlton's class for part of the day and Ms. Finch's class

Disney Quote of the Week



**“Laughter is timeless,
imagination has no age,
and dreams are forever.”**

– Walt Disney

for the other part. Ms. Carlton had a reputation of working well with hard-to-reach kids, and sure enough, Trevor behaved in a stellar way in her class. When he was with Ms. Finch, however, he was sent to the office nearly three times a week for explosive behavior. The teacher is 50 percent of every interaction with a student: By changing the way we give a direction or respond, we can reduce problematic behavior. Ms. Carlton had taken the time to build a trusting relationship with Trevor and learned to give directions in a way that he would respond well to. Interaction strategies are a type of accommodation that typically go unnamed and unwritten, but they were the reason that Trevor could feel safe and access the curriculum (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012).

If Ms. Carlton had written down the successful strategies she used with Trevor, the list might have started with avoiding authoritative directives such as, "Pick that up." To give Trevor a sense of control, Ms. Carlton always embedded choice in her directions, asking, "Do you want to be in the front of the line or the back of the line?" instead of simply telling him to "line up." This helped prevent a poor reaction (Minahan, 2019).

Ms. Carlton also conveyed respect and transparency by providing the reason behind each direction. Instead of saying, "No backpacks on the floor. I don't want to trip and fall!" Ms. Carlton would say, "Oh dear, I hope I don't fall. I have a bad knee! Could you please move your backpack?" Stating the reason *first* assured that Trevor knew the context (and necessity) of the demand.

Conversely, Ms. Finch would often go up close to Trevor, tower over him, and say in front of his peers, "Stop tapping your pencil!" This typically ended in a power struggle and Trevor's escalating behavior. Trevor, like many traumatized students, had experienced a loss of control in his life, and power struggles with an authoritative figure were particularly triggering. Ms. Carlton instinctively knew that a more private nonverbal direction could be less confrontational for a student in "fight or flight" mode. She would write, "Please stop tapping" on a piece of paper, put it gently on Trevor's desk without his peers noticing, and then give him space by walking away quickly. When possible, she also gave Trevor extended time to comply with directions to avoid power struggles, asking, for example, "Can you please pick that up before lunch?" rather than, "Pick that up now" (Minahan, 2019). This allowed Trevor time to decompress and respond rationally.

3. Be Specific About Relationship Building

At one point in the year, Ms. Carlton told Ms. Finch that building a relationship with Trevor was key to her success with him, and she suggested that Ms. Finch do the same.

Unfortunately, saying, "Build a relationship" is too vague and leaves too much up to the teacher's instincts. Instead, Ms. Carlton could have told Ms. Finch that she greeted Trevor every day at the classroom door and asked him about the Avengers or basketball. She could have told Ms. Finch how she used the "two by ten" rule; she talked to him for two minutes a day for 10 days in a row about topics unrelated to academics or behavior. Whenever Ms. Carlton could see she wouldn't have time for this in the 10-day period, she asked the counselor or special education teacher to cover her class for two minutes so she could go for a walk with Trevor. She repeated this trust-building strategy several times throughout

Important Websites

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

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

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

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

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

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

the year, especially after he exhibited anger or frustration and after school vacations and long weekends.

Ms. Carlton skillfully used relationship-building and interaction strategies to work with Trevor. Yet the impact could have been greater had she written and shared those strategies with Ms. Finch and the rest of Trevor's team via a shared document, behavior plan, or student success plan (Minahan, 2019). Likewise, if counselors, school nurses, and psychologists write and share such techniques with each classroom teacher, kids like Trevor, when triggered, wouldn't always have to leave class to find a safe adult.

4. Promote Predictability and Consistency

Not knowing what is coming next can put anyone on high alert, especially traumatized students. Providing predictability through visual schedules of the class agenda or school day can help. Ms. Carlton was adamant about previewing any changes to the normal routine ahead of time (saying, "We are going to have indoor recess today because of the snow," or "The DVD player isn't working so we can't watch a science video at the end of class today"). This prepared Trevor and thus elicited a calmer response.

A teacher's behavior can also feel unpredictable to traumatized students. When students are working independently and quietly—doing what they are supposed to be doing—they don't know when they will get the teacher's attention. But when students are doing the wrong thing—like drumming on the desk with a pencil in each hand or swearing—teachers are more predictable and react quickly! Because predictability is comforting to students with anxiety and trauma histories, they may resort to getting the teacher's attention through inappropriate means. Trevor could get Ms. Finch to react immediately by flipping his water bottle noisily, but could go 20 minutes without so much as eye contact from her when he was quietly reading.

To counter this imbalance and create an overall feeling of safety, teachers can use predictable positive attention (Minahan, 2014). During independent work time, if a teacher says to a student "Great work! I'll be back to check on you," the student has no way of predicting how long they need to wait—and from past experience they know that the teacher may forget to return altogether. Using predictable positive attention, however, the teacher can say, "I am going to check on you in 10 minutes," put a timer on the student's desk, and add, "Come tap me on the shoulder when the timer goes off." If the teacher has many students in the class that could benefit from this, she could transfer the strategy to small groups: "I will check on this desk group at X time."

Another strategy for providing predictable attention, especially for middle and high school students, is to hand an anxious or traumatized student a sticky note with a time on it as they walk into class each day. The first time, the note will need to be explained: "If you don't understand something in class, please don't worry—I am going to check on you during independent work time at 11:45, and I will answer any questions you have then." Ms. Carlton found this strategy comforting to Trevor. This predictable check-in pairs the negative thoughts the student may have ("I don't know how to do this") with a reassuring thought ("But my teacher will be here in seven minutes!"). The student can better tolerate uncomfortable feelings when they know help and a positive interaction are coming. Telling

the student what will happen and when and *always* following through establishes the teacher as a consistent, reliable adult.

5. Teach Strategies to "Change the Channel"

Traumatized students often engage in inaccurate thinking, tending to focus on the negative. Common classroom management strategies often only exasperate this tendency. How many of us have seen frequent movement breaks on a student's IEP or student success plan? It is one of the most common accommodations that we offer to students who seem dysregulated. Unfortunately, during these breaks, students can ruminate on negative memories, current stressors, angry thoughts, or worries. If we ask a high school student who is getting angry and becoming agitated to take a walk, he may ruminate the whole time and return just as angry. Sending a 1st grader to a "calming chair" can leave her to perseverate on worrying thoughts. Instead, we need to help them "change the channel." Both Ms. Carlton and Ms. Finch used breaks with Trevor, but in vastly different ways. When adults can't sleep, we often read a book or watch TV, which distracts us from uncomfortable thoughts so we can fall back asleep. Teachers can use the same principle for kids with trauma and anxiety: Teach students that their brain is like a remote control that they can use to "switch the channel" to help them calm down (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012). These switching activities are called cognitive distractions or thought breaks and are incompatible with negative thinking. A listening center or "find the picture" activity can be helpful to young children. For older students, you might try Mad Libs, trivia, or more abstract strategies such as counting all the green items in the room, saying the alphabet backwards, or thinking of the first 10 lines of a favorite movie. Ms. Carlton taught Trevor to do *Star Wars* trivia when he was upset, which helped him calm down quickly. Conversely when Ms. Finch had Trevor go for a walk, his negative thinking would escalate, and he would often not return to class.

6. Give Supportive Feedback to Reduce Negative Thinking

Many traumatized students interpret information through a negativity amplifier. When a teacher says, "Please correct the first problem," the student might hear, "You are stupid." Or a student might report that the teacher screamed at her when the teacher was really using a calm tone, as even neutral facial expressions can be misinterpreted. It is helpful to smile and explicitly say when you are happy with the student, a strategy Ms. Carlton utilized. When giving negative feedback, teachers can use the positive sandwich approach—starting and ending with a positive comment: (1) "I love how you remembered the formula," (2) "You made a small calculation error there," (3) "Great job getting problem #3 correct."

7. Create Islands of Competence

Recognizing areas of strength in students is a powerful way to combat the poor self-concept and negative thinking associated with trauma (Jennings, 2018). To support a more accurate self-concept, teachers can provide what Robert Brooks calls "islands of competence" for students swimming in a sea of inadequacy (2003). When a student thinks negatively, the negative moments during the day tend to weigh more heavily than the positive moments. We need to counter this effect with positive experiences. Educator teams need to ask

themselves, "Does the student *feel* competent during the day?" If the answer is no, contriving an island of competence for the student is in order. Ms. Carlton often asked Trevor to help a younger student or a peer who was struggling in an academic area Trevor was strong in, or had him fix the stapler when it was malfunctioning. She would also point out in a written note to Trevor that he was the first student to finish a math activity. In high school, educators may want to foster students' talents by never letting them drop electives (which might require creativity in scheduling academic support in core classes). It is important that students experience competence to develop a more accurate self-narrative and to begin to create a positive future picture of themselves. We want them to say, "I really helped that student with her artwork. When I grow up, I could work with kids." Or "I am good at fixing things. I could be a mechanic someday."

8. Limit Exclusionary Practices

Behavior is communication, and we've looked at how traumatized students often communicate feelings through their behavior. Teachers' behavior is also communication—and it may not be communicating the message we are striving to send. Common teacher practices such as ignoring inappropriate behavior, sending students to the office, or sending younger kids to sit alone at a back table or in the hallway can unintentionally trigger students who have experienced abandonment or neglect. We need to remember that when some of our students were young and cried, no one came. Ignoring them can trigger a trauma response and make them feel the teacher doesn't like them or is even happy that they are upset.

Ms. Finch would ignore Trevor when he was expressing anger, such as by crumpling up a paper, growling, or slinging a book from his desk onto the floor. On the other hand, Ms. Carlton responded to such moments at the beginning of the year by validating Trevor's feelings ("I am sorry you are upset" or "I see that you are angry"). This is a much more empathetic approach, will preserve the relationship, and will avoid triggering a trauma response in the student.

Another practice to be cautious about is using time with a preferred adult as an incentive. For example, a principal might say, "If you get all your homework done this week, you and I will have lunch together!" The problem with this is that if the student *doesn't* get all their homework done, then the principal withholds their attention and time. This implies the relationship is conditional and can trigger an abandonment trauma response for some students. It is better to use one-to-one time with students in a noncontingent way. This way adults are communicating, "I like you for who you are," not "I like you when you behave the right way."

Fostering a Feeling of Safety

Students can't learn unless they feel safe. When it comes to student trauma, there is much that is beyond educators' power, but there is also a great deal they can do to build a supportive and sensitive environment where students feel safe, comfortable, take risks, learn, and even heal.

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- Jessica Minahan is a licensed and board-certified behavior analyst, special educator, and consultant to schools internationally. She is the coauthor of *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students* (Harvard Education Press, 2012) and author of *The Behavior Code Companion: Strategies, Tools, and Interventions for Supporting Students with Anxiety-Related or Oppositional Behaviors* (Harvard Education Press, 2014).

Reading Public School Happenings

Parker Hosts CornHole Tournament

This past week, Parker Middle School held its first annual cornhole tournament for the coveted golden trophy. Below are some pictures from the event.





Birch Meadow All School Play Day

Recently, Birch Meadow held an all school play day where students engaged in playing different types of games. Below are some pictures from this fun filled day.





Parker 8th Grade Students Give to the Pine Street Inn

Over the last several weeks, Parker 8th Students have been collecting items to donate to the Pine Street Inn in Boston. Yesterday, the students packaged the items and delivered them to Pine Street in as part of their community service program. A special thanks goes out to the teachers, students, and Principal Ricki Shankland for all of their hard work on this project.





Stepping Stones...

-
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Catherine Clapp, Nurse Substitute, District
 - ✓ Danielle Collins, Food Service Director, District
 - ✓ Melissa Dal Pozzo, Volleyball Assistant Coach, RMHS
 - ✓ Daniel Malone, Lego League Coach, Parker
 - ✓ Gath Benedict, Lego League Coach, Parker

- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail
- Regular Education Tutor, 32 hours biweekly, Barrows Elementary School <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=853>

Blazing Trails...

"Insights from 200+ Years of Personalized Learning." Current initiatives to personalize learning in schools, while seen as a contemporary reform, actually continue a 200+ year struggle to provide scalable, mass, public education that also addresses the variable needs of individual learners. Indeed, some of the rhetoric and approaches reformers are touting today sound very familiar in this historical context. What, if anything, is different this time? In this paper Harvard professor David Dockterman provides a brief overview of historical efforts to create a scaled system of education for all children that also acknowledged individual learner variability. Through this overview Dockterman seeks patterns and insights to inform and guide contemporary efforts in personalized learning. [Read More](#)

"How to Foster Inclusivity in Sharing Holiday Traditions in the Classroom." It can be challenging to navigate the holiday season in the classroom -- sharing holiday traditions while also being inclusive -- according to Kyleen Gray, a high-school English teacher in Ontario. In this blog post, she shares several ways to demonstrate respect of different holidays and traditions and nurture acceptance and inclusivity in the classroom. [Read More](#)

"Is Homework Valuable? Depends on the Grade. Teachers Share Their Approaches." Teachers who responded to an online poll say the value of assigning homework depends on students' grade level. Some teachers responded that elementary-school students' only homework should be to read -- an approach that is supported by research showing the benefits of making reading a habit. [Read More](#)

"Farm-to-School Programs in Vermont, New York, Get Funding." Vermont officials will use \$300,000 in federal grants for farm-to-school programs to increase the amount of locally grown produce used in school meals. In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said \$1.5 million is available to school districts statewide for farm-to-school programs, which are part of the state's "No Student Goes Hungry" initiative. [Read More](#)

"US is Outsourcing Teacher Positions to Fill for Shortage." A shortage of teachers in the US -- estimated in 2018 at about 112,000 -- has some schools recruiting educators from overseas. International teachers say that, despite some challenges, they are drawn by higher pay and increased opportunities. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!