



Pathways

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

November 22, 2019

Volume 11, Number 9

Upcoming Dates

- November 22 – No School for Students; Parent Conference/In-Service Day
- November 27 – (11:00 a.m.) Early Release for Thanksgiving Holiday
- November 28 – Happy Thanksgiving; (10:15 a.m.) RMHS Football vs. Stoneham
- November 29 – No School/Offices Closed
- December 1 – (2:00 p.m.) Annual Downtown Tree Lighting Celebration
- December 4 – Grade 9-12 Early Release; (6:00 p.m.) Coolidge Grade 6 Winter Concert in the RMHS PAC; (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Grade 7, 8 & Select Winter Concert in the RMHS PAC
- December 5 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Informal Recital in the Endslo PAC; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Grade 8/Select Winter Concert
- December 7 – (10:00 a.m.) REF Festival of Trees at the Parker Middle School
- December 8 -- (12:00 p.m.) REF Festival of Trees at the Parker Middle School
- December 10 – (6:00 p.m.) Parker Grade 6 & 7 Winter Concert; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting in the RMHS Library
- December 11 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release
- December 12 – (6:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Songfest in the Endslo PAC
- December 14 – (8:00 a.m.) RMHS PSST Craft Faire @ RMHS

Birch Meadow Presents *Willy Wonka*

Last weekend, the Birch Meadow Elementary School presented the show, *Willy Wonka Kids*. Eighty students were involved in the show, either as cast or crew. A special thanks goes out to the enormous parent support to run this show. It was an amazing two nights!



- December 18 – (7:00 p.m.)
RMHS Winter Concert
- December 19 – (7:00 p.m.)
School Committee Meeting
in the Schettini Library

SEPAC Meeting on December 10th

There will be a Special Education Advisory Council (SEPAC) Meeting on Tuesday, December 10th in the RMHS Schettini Library. A representative from the DESE (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) is scheduled to present at this meeting about the new Tiered Focused Monitoring (TFM) parent information plan.

If you have any questions, please contact Director of Student Services Dr. Jennifer Stys at Jennifer.stys@reading.k12.ma.us or Reading SEPAC Board Member Laura Noonan at lnoonan.sepac@gmail.com

Elementary Report Card Overview

Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching Chris Kelley has created an informational presentation for parents regarding the changes in this year's Elementary Report Cards. You can access the presentation at the link below.

<https://www.powtoon.com/c/dWeUTeDEmeo/2/m>

LIFTS Trauma IV Course Open For Registration

We are happy to announce that we have successfully scheduled Lesley Trauma IV here in Reading.

The Impact of Trauma on Learning: Action Research and Seminar

Students demonstrate their understanding of the attributes of trauma-sensitivity by working together to design and conduct research that assesses the outcomes of efforts to improve trauma-sensitivity in classrooms, schools, or other learning environments.

This is the fourth and final class that you need to complete to earn your graduate certificate in Trauma and Learning. *Trauma I-III are pre-requisites.*

Trauma IV Monday's 3:30PM-6:30PM

Dates and Locations:

Starts Monday January 27th at Parker Middle School- Multi-Purpose Room

The rest of the dates will be at Reading Memorial High School in the Distance Learning Room on the 4th floor.

- Monday February 10th
- Monday February 24th
- Monday March 9th
- Monday March 23rd
- SNOW DAY- Monday March 30th

If you are interested in attending. Please send completed registration form and check for \$500 made out to Lesley University, to Lauren Sabella at Reading Memorial High School. Or you can email the completed

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to RMHS Drama on another successful weekend of the fall musical “Chicago”
- Congratulations to the girls swim team on an outstanding showing at the state meet.
- Good luck to RMHS Cheer Team as they move forward in the state competition.
- Kudos to RMHS swimmers Molly Hamlin for winning the 100 & 200 freestyle and Anna Boemer for winning the 50 freestyle.
- Kudos to the RMHS swim 4 x 400 freestyle relay team of Ally Kneeland, Katie Kneeland, Molly Hamlin and Anna Boemer on winning the race in a new meet record time.

registration form to Lauren.Sabella@Reading.K12.MA.US and indicate that you will pay Lesley Directly by credit card. This class is eligible for tuition reimbursement if that is a part of your Reading Public School contract. Please send complete tuition reimbursement form if applicable. For out of district tuition reimbursement inquiries please contact your district administrator.

Understanding Two Very Different Kinds of Memory

In this *Education Next* article, British educator Clare Sealy says it’s commonly believed that to make a lesson stick in students’ memories, teachers need to make it spectacular, exciting, and unusual. “Memorable events, in this view, should form the template for creating memorable lessons,” says Sealy – but she believes that’s a myth, stemming from conflating two ways in which we remember things:

- *Episodic memory* – These are memories of events each day, and they are formed automatically, with no special effort on our part: what we had for lunch, a joke someone told this afternoon. The downside of episodic memories is that they fade quickly; we won’t remember what we had for lunch a month ago unless something very unusual happened at the meal, and that joke – what *was* the punch line?

This means that if we as teachers put our faith in episodic memory, we’ll be constantly disappointed when we ask our students what they learned the day before. They’ll “remember all sorts of things,” says Sealy: “that you used Post-it Notes, that Mollie was late, that you spilt your coffee, that Liam made a hilarious joke.” In other words, students remember the “contextual tags but not the actual learning. Episodic memory is so tied up with context it is no good for remembering things once that context is no longer present.” This is especially true when students move to a different classroom, grade, or school. It’s not that last year’s teachers are lying when they say their students mastered fractions; it’s that students’ memories were largely episodic, and now the context is different.

- *Semantic memory* – This kind involves much more work – taking notes, studying, and encoding information – but the advantage is that such memories last longer. “Semantic memories have been liberated from the emotional and spatial/temporal context in which they were first acquired,” says Sealy. “Once a concept has been stored in semantic memory, it is more flexible and transferable between different contexts. Semantic memory is central, therefore, to long-term learning, learning that can be put to use in novel contexts to solve unexpected problems. Semantic memory is what we use when we are problem-solving or being creative.”

Episodic memories are the stuff of life in schools, especially the way students are treated and how adults treat each other. And broadening experiences outside of school (field trips to museums, theaters, historic sites, forests, mountains) are especially important for children whose families are not able to provide them. But the hum-drum semantic memories are the most important takeaways from schooling.

Cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham says that “memory is the residue of thought.” This means, says Sealy, that “teachers have to make sure that lessons give

students the opportunity to think about the things we actually want them to remember, rather than some extraneous other thing. We need them to think about the message of the lesson, rather than the medium we use to teach it.” And this is why “fun” lessons may be getting in the way of long-term learning – the medium may become more prominent than the message. “When teachers plan lessons,” she continues, “we need to be mindful of what children will be thinking about during each part of the lesson, rather than what they will be feeling or doing. Have we planned activities that will ensure children think hard about the right things?”

British school inspectors noticed this phenomenon as they watched elementary students doing science experiments. Checking in with students, observers found that kids could explain what they were doing but not the underlying scientific concepts; there wasn’t enough cognitive bandwidth for that. The logical conclusion is that students should be taught the concepts before diving into hands-on experiments. “Once the scientific concepts are secure,” says Sealy, “children are much more able to really ‘think like scientists,’ with the added benefit that the practical activity then consolidates understanding of the previous learning.”

The same is true of having students research information on their own: the cognitive work of looking for information and making judgments about its relevance prevents them from grasping and remembering content.

And this insight also applies to classroom mathematical discovery and creative problem-solving. Sealy believes these activities “are completely inappropriate for the initial stage of learning, when children are encountering a concept for the first time. If we want children to become independent problem-solvers, we need to teach them carefully and explicitly so that semantic memory can begin to form. Counterintuitive as it may seem, children do not become independent problem solvers by independently solving problems. This is because when children are trying to solve problems before they know the necessary math to do so, they will be expending considerable mental energy tracking what they are meant to be solving against what they have found out so far, so much so that even when they are successful, they will have forgotten what they actually did en route to finally finding the answer!... Frustratingly, current *performance* is a terrible guide to knowing whether or not *learning* has actually happened or not.”

Explicit, step-by-step instruction is essential, she says, followed by retrieval and application at intervals after the initial lesson, with fewer cues and prompts. Only then will students begin to cement knowledge and skills in long-term memory.

It’s common for people to say they don’t remember anything they learned in school – but this simply means they don’t have an episodic memory of specific lessons. That’s not a bad thing, says Sealy, because if we remembered everything, our brains would explode. But if we were taught well, we know lots of deeper stuff, says Sealy: “triangles and oxygen, Anne Boleyn and paragraphs, square numbers and ox bow lakes, color-mixing and Lady Macbeth... That’s the beauty of semantic memory. It isn’t, and doesn’t need to be, tied up with episodic clutter.” Those deeper memories, formed by good teaching, serve as a foundation for further learning and all sorts of creative endeavors – even if we don’t remember learning them.

Superintendent's Office Half-Hours this Week

All are welcome

12/3 4:00 p.m.
Superintendent's
Office

12/4 12:15 p.m. Killam

12/9 8:00 a.m. Barrows

12/12 2:45 p.m. RMHS

Well-schooled people are “knowledge-privileged,” says Sealy: “You have been given opportunities to think hard about stuff you didn’t know and therefore have a vast repository of semantic memory on hand, readily available whenever you want it. Yet it is all too easy to overlook this privilege and vastly underestimate how much we do in fact know and how much our schooling benefited us. Because we don’t remember learning what we know, we don’t remember the effort that went into teaching it.”

Sealy’s concern is that schools that focus on immersing students in “fun” and “involving” lessons may be short-changing this vital area, leaving kids “with an impoverished ability to think or be truly creative... Before we decide to impose our own agendas onto children’s education,” she concludes, “we need to check our knowledge privilege before making decisions that will deprive children of their fair share of the rich cultural inheritance our world affords and to which they are entitled.”

“The Best Way to Help Children Remember Things? Not ‘Memorable Experiences’” by Clare Sealy in *Education Next*, September 26, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2XsBfjy>
Reprinted from Marshall Memo 812.

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 few week’s office hours are as follows:

Thanksgiving Week: No Office Hours

12/3 4:00 p.m. Superintendent’s Office
12/4 12:15 p.m. Killam
12/9 8:00 a.m. Barrows
12/12 2:45 p.m. RMHS

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 Festival of Trees on December 7 and 8

Don’t miss the Reading Education Foundation’s (REF) 18th annual Festival of Trees, Saturday and Sunday, December 7 and 8, at the Parker Middle School in Reading. This signature fundraising event is a magical and memorable community holiday tradition for adults and children of all ages. Proceeds from this event go towards teacher grants in Reading public schools. Visit www.readingef.org to order raffle tickets in advance, to donate a tree, and to learn more!



FREE PARENT WORKSHOP

HOW TO HAVE "THE TALK"

An information session for parents on how to talk to your kids about sex.

DECEMBER 9TH 2019

6:30PM-7:30PM

THE READING PUBLIC LIBRARY
64 MIDDLESEX AVE, READING, MA 01867

In order to promote healthy mental, physical and behavioral health in our community, we would like to welcome you to join us to have conversations around, and share resources for, how to promote healthy decision making for the youth in our community regarding sex. We feel that it is important that our kids get accurate information from family rather than be misinformed by friends or the internet, where they may draw incorrect assumptions that could lead to risky or unhealthy decision making. Parents of students of all ages welcome to attend.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: LAUREN.SABELLA@READING.K12-MA.US

Reading Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration

DECEMBER 1, 2:00 - 4:30 PM
READING TOWN COMMON

FEATURING:

TREE LIGHTING - 4:30 PM
HAY & TROLLEY RIDES
ENTERTAINMENT
GREAT FOOD

FEATURING:

PICTURES WITH SANTA
LIVE ICE SCULPTURE
KID'S ACTIVITIES
LIVE MUSIC



BY READING-NORTH READING CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



PLATINUM SPONSOR: AUSTIN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

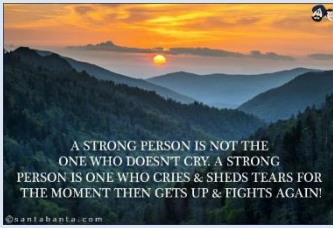
GOLD SPONSORS: NORTHERN BANK, READING COOPERATIVE BANK

SILVER SPONSORS: DOYON'S APPLIANCE, READING GYMNASTICS
READING ORTHODONTICS, CLASSIFIED REALTY GROUP



Austin Prep

Quote of the Week . . .



"A strong person is not the one who doesn't cry. A strong person is one who cries and sheds tears for the moment then gets up and fights again."

—Unknown

Reading Public School Happenings

RMHS High Five For This Week

Below is this week's RMHS High Five.

Autumn Hendrickson, Class of 2020

Favorite Book: *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *A Higher Call* by Adam Makos & Larry Alexander

Favorite Quote: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall"- Confucius

Favorite Subjects: Honors Story Writing, History, Physics

Activities/Clubs/Sports/Employment: GSA, Student Council, AWOD, RCASA

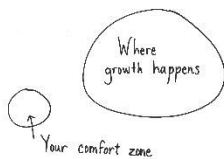
Plans for after high School: Autumn hopes to become either a middle school English or History teacher. It is Autumn's hope that she may someday be lucky enough to teach at a school she attended.



MCAS Presentations

Over the last few weeks, building Principals have been presenting MCAS results to their respective community. Some have been virtual presentations while others have been at community meetings. Below are Principals Beth Leavitt (Barrows) and Dr. Joanne King (Wood End) presenting to parents.

Disney Quote of the Week



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

— Rapunzel (Tangled)



Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Wood End nurse **Lisa Suglia** on the birth of her grandson Alexander on November 17th weighing 7 lbs. 1 oz and 19 ½" long.
- Congratulations to Barrows Secretary **Donna Walsh** on the birth of her 7th grandchild Josephine on November 17th.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Christopher Nelson, Director of Community Education, District
 - ✓ Meaghan Killion, LTS Grade 3, Joshua Eaton
 - ✓ Richard Belmonte, Community Services Coordinator, District
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

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>

Special Education Paraeducator, 58 hours biweekly, Joshua Eaton Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=860>

Special Education Program Paraeducator, 58 hours biweekly, Joshua Eaton Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=861>

Boys Lacrosse Coaching Assistant

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=862>

Cafeteria Worker, 45 hours biweekly, Joshua Eaton Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=863>

Blazing Trails...

"Massachusetts Principal Utilizes Book Strategies to Boost Girls' Confidence." Principal Liz Garden convenes a group of fifth-grade girls at her elementary school in Holden, Massachusetts, for conversations about confidence -- centered around a book they all read. In this article, Garden describes how what began as mini-therapy sessions became much more. [Read More](#)

"How Culturally Responsive Schools Improve Outcomes." Teachers and administrators should adopt culturally responsive approaches to create a sense of belonging for all students, writes Eileen Belastock, director of academic technology for Mount Greylock RSD in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Belastock shares about a recent webinar in which panelists discussed culturally responsive teaching and how it can affect student outcomes. [Read More](#)

"How Sesame Street's Muppets Became Revolutionaries." Now celebrating its 50th year of broadcasting, Sesame Street remains committed to pushing the boundaries for social change. Now in its 50th year, Sesame Street has remained astonishingly, resolutely inclusive. Long before the topics showed up on adult TV, Sesame Street was tackling HIV/AIDS, home eviction, racism, neurodiversity, and disability with its audience of toddlers. Only a year ago, the show debuted a 6-year-old Muppet with tassels of yellow hair whose mother is battling addiction. All along the way, Sesame Street has faced down hand-wringers who insisted that young kids couldn't handle any of it. [Read More](#)

"Engineers Without Borders Plans Library for Kenyan Village." The Engineers Without Borders club at Montana State University is switching from its initial focus on water and sanitation for projects in Kenya to education. The result will be a library at the Emwaniro high school to serve students and the public with a planned opening in 2021. [Read More](#)

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

Have a Great Week and a Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving!