



Pathways

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

December 13, 2019

Volume 11, Number 11

Upcoming Dates

- December 14 – (8:00 a.m.)
RMHS PSST Craft Faire @
RMHS
- December 18 – (7:00 p.m.)
RMHS Winter Concert
- December 19 – (7:00 p.m.)
School Committee Meeting
in the Schettini Library
- December 23 – January 1 –
Holiday Break
- January 2 – Back to School
- January 6 – (7:00 p.m.)
School Committee Meeting
in the Schettini Library
- January 8 – Grade 6 – 8 Early
Release
- January 10 – (7:00 p.m.)
RMHS Improvosaurus in the
Endslow PAC

The Arts Shine in the Reading Public Schools

The holiday season is one of the many times of the year where the arts are in full display in the Reading Public Schools. Over the last two weeks, we have had concerts, field trips, and projects where students are showcasing their skills and talents.

We want to thank the hard work and dedication of our talented art, music, and drama teachers who work tirelessly to provide an amazing experience for our students.



Parker Grade 6 Chorus Directed by Jenny DiMuzio



Parker Grade 8 Band Under the Direction of Andrew Norton

Kudos and Accolades

- Kudos to the RMHS Chorus on an outstanding winter concert.
- Kudos to the Parker Grade 6 & 7 bands and chorus for a great winter concert.



Parker Grade 8 Chorus Under the Direction of Jenny DiMuzio



Coolidge Grade 6 Chorus Under the Direction of Lisa Wistrom



Coolidge Bell Choir Under the Direction of Cheryl Webster

Superintendent's Office
Half-Hours this Week

All are welcome

12/19 5:00 p.m.
Central Office

12/20 8:15 a.m. RMHS



Coolidge Grade 7/8 Chorus Under the Direction of Lisa Wistrom



Coolidge Grade 7/8 Band Under the Direction of Cheryl Webster



Coolidge 2D Art Students Developing Personal Art in the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston

Parenting in the Digital Age

Become the Media Mentor Your Child Needs

By Guest Contributor Chip Donohue, Senior Fellow and Member of the Advisory Board of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media for *Spark and Stitch Institute Blog*

It has never been an easy job to be a parent of a young child. But in our fast-paced and easily distracted digital age the use of handheld devices has become ubiquitous. Smartphone and tablets are often found in your hands, and we worry about how often screens can be found in the little hands of young children. Technology has provided adults and children with powerful tools for communication, connection and collaboration.

Young children need a media mentor who understands that the child comes before the technology and that young children need to gain knowledge and skills to use these powerful tools for exploration, discovery, curiosity, creativity, self-expression, documenting and demonstrating their learning. Parents and caregivers need to be “first responders” to help young children safely navigate the digital age.



Parenting in the digital age – Here are ten tips for becoming the media mentor your child needs:

1. Remember that relationships matter most –

Using technology with your child begins with low tech, high-touch opportunities for interactions, shared experiences, discoveries, and joint-engagement with media – *Encourage your child to use tech as a tool for connecting with you, with siblings and with friends.*

2. Integrate technology use into social and emotional learning –

Technology should be used in ways that support positive social interactions, **mindfulness**, **creativity**, and a sense of initiative – *Use technology that invited interactions with others and cooperative play.*

Quote of the Week . . .



"I love the person that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection."

—Thomas Paine

3. Use technology as a tool –

Technology is one more important tool for exploring, learning and creating that you can put in your child's little hands – *Make sure technology is not more or less important than other tools children use to learn in the early years like blocks and art materials, and plan for unplugged play time too.*

4. Trust your instincts –

Focus less on how many minutes your child engages with screen media and more on the quality of the content, the context for using media (who, what, where, when and how) and how engaged your child is in the experience – *Shift your focus from "how much" your child is watching to "what your child is watching and doing when using technology."*

5. Empower children to use technology as a tool for 21st century learning –

Select technology that encourages inquiry, exploration, discovery, documentation and demonstrating what they know – *Use your smartphone or tablet as a tool for digital storytelling and shared adventures.*

6. Provide beneficial technology experiences –

Offer media experiences that are engaging and interactive, include positive interactions with others, give the child control, emphasize interactions, language use and relationships, and invite co-viewing and joint engagement with media – *Reimagine screen time as beneficial for your child to use technology while still remaining cautious and paying attention to headlines about how bad technology is for young children's health and development.*

7. Make media use a language-rich experience –

Narrate your own use of technology and when children are using screen media talk about what they're doing, ask questions, make comments and offer suggestions about what they can do after the screen is turned off – *Help your child connect screen-based activities to real world experiences.*

8. Help children progress from just consuming media to creating it –

Simple tools like a digital camera are powerful media creation tools when paired with the curiosity and creativity of a child – *Think about how that digital camera that is in your hands or in your pocket all the time, can be a tool for checking your email and replying to messages, and can also turn into a tool for shared creative experiences.*

9. Pay attention to your own technology use in front of children –

Children learn media habits and how and when to use technology by observing the important adults in their life so choose to be a **positive technology role model** – *Reflect on where and when and how often you are on your phone or tablet and strive to decrease the amount of time using technology distracts you from being attentive and engaged with your child.*

10. Be a media mentor—

Young children need trusted adults who are active and intentional media mentors and role models to guide them safely in the digital age – *Model healthy technology habits, set clear expectations for everyone in your home and be sure to follow them yourself, use technology together and plan for "no tech" times and places.*

That's a lot to take in and take on, I know.

None of us can do all those things or play all those roles all the time. So, reflect on what you are already doing well to promote healthy media use in your home and for your child, and then set some priorities for next steps that balance benefits with potential harms. Avoid

Disney Quote of the Week



"Oh yes, the past can hurt.
But, the way I see it, you
can either run from it... or
learn from it."

(Rafiki to Simba)

either/or thinking. You can encourage beneficial technology use *and* promote healthy activities without screens and devices.

Perhaps the best place to begin is to define what "living well with media" means for your family and in your home. And as Fred Rogers reminds us in the quote below, when young children are involved it's not about the technology, it's always about the relationships.

...Let's not get so fascinated by what the technology can do that we forget what it can't do...It's through relationships that we grow best and learn best.

– Cited by Hedda Sharapan in the Fred Rogers Company Professional Development Newsletter, May 2012

Cutting and Self-Injury

In this *New York Times* article, Benedict Carey quotes a New York City high-school student's description of the first time she cut herself at the age of 13: "I had this Popsicle stick and carved it into a sharp point and scratched myself. I'm not even sure where the idea came from. I just knew it was something people did. I remember crying a lot and thinking, 'Why did I just do that?' I was kind of scared of myself." Despite these feelings, when she felt a surge of sadness, anxiety, and shame, she used a knife or razor blade to injure her wrists, forearms, and other part of her body. "I would do it for five to 15 minutes," she said, "and afterward I didn't have that terrible feeling. I could go on with my day."

According to recent surveys in several countries, about 20 percent of adolescents report having harmed themselves at least once to soothe emotional pain, and a survey of U.S. college students found a similar percentage. "The apparent epidemic levels of the behavior have exposed a structural weakness of psychiatric care," says Carey. "Because self-injury is considered a 'symptom,' and not a stand-alone diagnosis like depression, the testing of treatments has been haphazard and therapists have little evidence to draw on... When youngsters who injure themselves seek help, they are often met with alarm, misunderstanding, and overreaction." Cutting can become addictive, as powerful as an opiate habit, providing these troubled teens with one reliable comfort, a secret friend. "Something about it was so grounding," says a 32-year-old woman who cut herself regularly for more than a decade and finally stopped. "I got to the point where I cut myself a lot, and when I came out of it, I couldn't remember things that happened, like what set it off in the first place."

What are the origins of self-harm, and are any treatments effective? It used to be thought that it was limited to severely impaired youth with histories of sexual abuse and major body alienation. But self-harm has spread into the general population. Because no surveys with questions about self-harm were conducted before the mid-1980s, it's not clear whether the phenomenon has been fueled by social media. It's likely that reports of celebrities engaging in the behavior caught young people's attention: Princess Diana talked about self-harm, as did Johnny Depp and Angelina Jolie, and a popular 1990s music video by Pink contained vivid scenes of cutting. Dozens of online forums provided support and

Important Websites

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

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

understanding, and may have unintentionally portrayed the behavior as a sign of membership in a special club.

The most common misconception, says Carey, is that cutting is a suicide attempt. It's not. In the words of one 16-year-old, "you cut yourself for different reasons. Like, it's the only way you know to deal with intense insecurities, or anger at yourself. Or you're so numb as a result of depression, you can't feel anything – and this is one thing you can feel."

The most effective treatment is a specialized form of talk therapy (called dialectical behavior therapy, or D.B.T.) that was originally developed to treat borderline personality disorder. "Through one-on-one and group therapy sessions," reports Carey, "at least once a week for two months or more, people who injure themselves learn coping skills to weather troughs of misery."

"Getting to the Root of Self-Harm" by Benedict Carey in *The New York Times*, November 12, 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2E2aoBD>. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 815.

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:

12/19 5:00 p.m. Central Office

12/20 8:15 a.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 Public School Happenings

RMHS High Five For This Week

Below is this week's RMHS High Five.

High Five: Shanyce Williams

- **Favorite Book:** *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas
- **Favorite Quote:** "You Matter"
- **Favorite Subject:** English
- **Activities/Clubs/Sports/Employment:** Summer Internship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and RMHS Library Assistant
- **Plans for after RMHS:** Shanyce plans to attend college to study Nursing

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 Education Foundation Festival of Trees

Last weekend, the Reading Education Foundation held its annual Festival of Trees at Parker Middle School. Proceeds go to help fund the teacher innovation grants and professional development for our schools. Below are some pictures of the event.

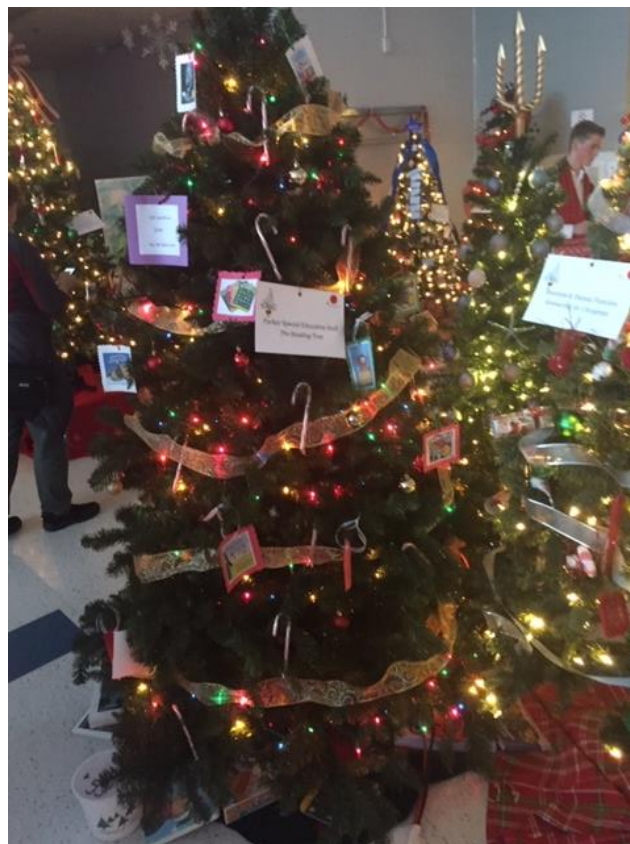
A special thanks goes to the Reading Education Foundation for all of their efforts and hard work in running this and other fundraising events.



RMHS Singers Perform at Festival



School Committee Tree



Stepping Stones...

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Josephine Feltus, Temporary Custodian/Theatre Tech, District
 - ✓ Megan Wilkes, Extended Day Helper, RISE
 - ✓ Kristie Middleton, Food Service, RMHS
 - ✓ Charlene Belcher, Extended Day Head Teacher, Killam
 - ✓ Amalia Lisauskas, Chemistry Teacher, RMHS
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Blazing Trails...

"Seniors Helping Seniors: Quincy, MA Students Help Neighbors Dig Out From Storm." In Quincy, there's a plan for that. It's called Seniors Helping Seniors. It pairs a senior high school student with a senior citizen for shoveling help. And both parties get a lot out of the relationship. "Seniors Helping Seniors is essentially a program designed to connect senior citizens in need of snow removal with high school students fulfilling community service requirements," Quincy City Council President Brad Croall said. [Read More](#)

"Talk Less So Students Learn More." In moments when students are not understanding, we often find ourselves trying to explain more clearly. But sometimes, more teacher talk doesn't offer clarity. When we consistently lean on teacher explanation as a primary teaching tool, we teach our students that we are the dispensers of information and they are the consumers. How can we shift from teachers owning the learning to student ownership? How do we move from students being dependent on teachers to using each other or tools as a support? Instead of jumping in to show the way, provide the tools and time to encourage cognitive struggle to get students doing more while you say less. [Read More](#)

"New Class has Holliston High, MA Students Addressing Community Problems." Students in Kaitlin Mills' "Service Learning: Call to Action" course at Holliston High School in Massachusetts learn about issues such as homelessness, mental health awareness and human trafficking, then work with a community partner on a solution to a selected problem. Current student projects address eating disorders, plastic water bottle waste and social isolation among the elderly. [Read More](#)

"Coaching for Success." Instructional coaching isn't simply about checking a box. It's an opportunity for even the most effective educators to grow and learn from one another. In this issue, coaches and leaders explore how schools can turn the practice into an essential, relationship-based lever for instructional improvement in this ASCD Express. [Read More](#)

"US Continues to Trail in PISA Scores." Results of the Program for International Student Assessment -- an exam of 15-year-olds from 79 countries in reading, math and science -- released today show China and Singapore ranked first and second, respectively, in all three subjects. Students in the US continue to lag behind their international peers, and scores remained largely unchanged since 2015. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!