



Pathways

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

January 17, 2020

Volume 7, Number 13

Upcoming Dates

- January 17 – (11:00 a.m.) Prek-12 Early Release; (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the RMHS PAC
- January 18 – (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the RMHS PAC
- January 19 – (2:00 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the RMHS PAC
- January 20 – Martin Luther King Day – No School/Offices Closed; (10:00 a.m.) MLK Day Celebration at RMHS
- January 21 – 24 – RMHS Midterms
- January 23 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library – FY21 Budget Public Hearing
- January 27 – 2nd Semester begins @ Middle & High School; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library; FY21 Budget Vote
- January 29 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Sophomore Parent Night in the RMHS PAC
- February 6 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library
- February 11 – (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting in the Schettini Library
- February 12 – (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Future Freshman Night @ RMHS

Superintendent's Message for FY21 Budget

I respectfully present to the School Committee and the Greater Reading Community the FY21 Superintendent's Recommended Budget of \$48,419,663 representing an increase of \$1,652,315 or 3.5% over the FY20 budget. The increases are broken down by non-accommodated costs (all costs except special education out of district transportation and tuition and one community priority) which increased by 3.32% over the FY20 Budget and accommodated costs (special education out of district transportation and tuition and one community priority) which increased by 5.24% over the FY20 Budget.

This recommended budget is balanced and aligns with the budget guidance that we received from the Reading Finance Committee on October 16, 2019 and subsequent discussions with the Town Manager and Town Accountant. The Finance Committee's recommended guidance is based on an analysis of current and future town revenue and expense projections of the Community.

The budget message for this year continues to be positive and builds on the momentum of last year with no reductions in personnel or services. This budget emphasizes strong fiscal practices and human resource management while strengthening our PreK-12 curriculum and instructional practices and continuing to build and develop outstanding in-district special education programs.

The Superintendent's Recommended FY21 budget includes funding to primarily address the following financial drivers:

- Funding of all contractual step and COLA increases for represented and non-represented employees. FY21 will be the third and final year of all collective bargaining agreements.
- Known out of district special education tuition and transportation expenses reflecting known and anticipated increased rates, as well as changes and potential changes in types of placements.
- The second year of a three-year funding cycle for social studies curriculum and training to align with the Massachusetts Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks.
- Funding for curriculum materials, curriculum software, and professional development for Algebra 1 and Grade 7-12 Foreign Language. We are currently in the process of reviewing possible resources for the 2020-2021 school year.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the girls & boys hockey, girls & boys basketball, swimming and gymnastics on wins last week.
- Thanks to the RMHS Guidance Department for organizing the recent Alumni Day and Junior Parent Night.

- Funding for a dyslexia screener for early elementary students. We are in the process of piloting and researching potential tools for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Contractual increase in regular day, athletics and extra-curricular transportation per the final year of the transportation contract.
- The net addition of 0.54 FTE Special Education Paraeducators, 1.6 FTE Special Education Teachers and related service providers, and 1.0 FTE Payroll/HR Administrative Assistant (Community Priority) due to current and anticipated in-district special education programmatic needs and overall district needs. The breakdown is as follows:
 - 0.43 FTE Special Education Program Paraeducator at Killam (Hired in FY20)
 - 0.32 FTE Special Education Occupational Therapy Assistant for the district (Increase in FTE in FY20)
 - 0.50 FTE Special Education Program Teacher at Killam (Increase in FTE in FY20)
 - 0.10 FTE Physical Therapist for District (Increase in FTE in FY20)
 - 0.10 FTE adjustment districtwide for special education paraeducator support (Anticipated for FY21)
 - 1.0 FTE Payroll/HR Administrative Assistant (Community Priority - To be hired in FY20)
 - 0.4 FTE Special Education Occupational Therapist (Anticipated for FY21)
 - 0.6 FTE Speech and Language Pathologist (Anticipated for FY21)

In addition, we continue to closely monitor our revolving accounts and are recommending the following adjustments to those account offsets (see Figure 1 below) in the FY21 budget totaling a net overall increase of \$100,000. Refer to Figures 34 and 35 for a more detailed description of these accounts. An overall analysis is being conducted with the Chief Financial Officer, Director of Community and Adult Education, RISE Pre-School Director and the Director of Student Services to review the fee and expense structure of each program to determine if any additional adjustments may be needed in future years.

Figure 1: Revolving Account Offset Changes to Budget

Revolving Account	Change to Offset
Full Day Kindergarten	\$ 65,000
Athletics	30,000
Extended Day	5,000
RISE Pre-School	20,000
Use of School Property	-
Special Education Tuition	(30,000)
Extra-Curricular	10,000
Coolidge Extra-Curricular	-
Parker Extra-Curricular	-
Total Increase in Offsets	\$ 100,000

Superintendent's Office
Half-Hours this Week

All are welcome

1/17 8:00 a.m. Wood
End

1/21 2:15 p.m. Parker

1/22 12:30 p.m. Barrows

Not included in this budget are any unanticipated costs associated with increases in student enrollment, homeless students, English Language Learner students, or extraordinary special education costs related to out of district placement tuition, transportation, or other services as required by a student's individualized education plan. We closely track additional potential cost increases throughout the fiscal year, and we will keep the Committee informed if any unanticipated costs emerge.

In addition to the above financial drivers, the FY21 budget strives to address our District Improvement Plan and Superintendent Goals. During FY21 (2020-21 school year), we will begin a new District Improvement Plan which will most likely focus on some, or all, of the following areas:

- Decreasing the equity gap between high needs students and the general population of students
- Refine and Support Data Systems
- Evaluate and Refine Standards Based Instructional Systems
- Monitor Student Social Emotional Growth and Refine Systems of Support
- Improve Physical and Psychological Security of Schools
- Develop a Multi-Year Capital Plan to Upgrade and Improve School Facilities
- Design a Community Portrait of the Graduate

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

In Closing

In conclusion, we are grateful for the financial and community support that we have received and as a result, our district will be able to provide the necessary resources to stay focused on the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of our students. The Superintendent's Recommended FY21 budget reflects those priorities. While we are proud of the fact that we are a district that is on the forefront in many areas, we have challenges that lie ahead, including addressing the needs of our students with disabilities, educational space needs and improving the social and emotional well-being of our students. We are proud of the work that our teachers and administrators do every day to improve teaching and learning in our district. In addition, we have enthusiastic and respectful students who arrive to school every day eager to learn. This is a testament to our parents and our community who value the importance of education and the role that it needs to play in a community. There is no question that a major indicator of the quality of life for everyone in a community can be measured by the quality of its schools and by a community's commitment to its children. In this way, the quality of a school district affects every single person in a community, and the Town of Reading is no exception.

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

WINTER UPDATE - COMMUNITY FROM THE OFFICE OF LEARNING & TEACHING



January, 2020

In this issue:

- Curriculum Guides Updates
- Reading Institute—Spring
- SS Update
- Parent University
- Info from DESE

Hello from Learning & Teaching

Happy new year and welcome to 2020! We are pleased to share updates and news happening in Learning & Teaching across our Reading Public Schools.

Curriculum Guides Updates

There is continued progress on Curriculum Guides across all grades and subjects. Content teams at the middle schools are working on guides which will be published by the end of the school year. Additionally, departments at RMHS are working on finishing guides for all subjects. Please check out: <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/learning-teaching/> and look for the section titled "Curriculum" for links to the published guides available to date.

Chris Kelley @cmkelleyteach - 12h
First meeting of our Portrait of the Graduate Design Team!! Excited to see what we discuss!



Allison Straker @strakerREADS - 14h
Starting a great conversation at @rmhs_reading



Ms. Cy Oline @browns0202 - 1d 9
Students teachers and principal working together in a meeting to discuss curriculum guides, further refine, comparing relationships of standards and demonstrating and making equivalent factors with a common denominator in fractions. Others were looking at math and science standards.



Tweets showcasing the varied learning happening around our district

Social Studies Update

Work continues on the implementation of the 2018 HSS Frameworks. Ninth grade team members are reviewing our current integrated model and making revisions as needed. Grades 6 and 8 are in the midst of incorporating new content and practice standards. A committee of K-5 teachers is being formed so that revision work can begin at the elementary level. We will be looking closely at the newly implemented practice standards and for cross-curricular opportunities.



Reading Institute Spring is coming -March 20, 2020

Reading Institute Spring, our district-wide professional day, is on March 20th! The theme for this year is **"Meeting Students Where they Are and Creating a Path for the Future."** Planning is in full swing and we're currently working to coordinate and finalize the keynote speaker and break-out sessions. If you have an idea or session proposal that you wish to discuss, please send an email to Chris Kelley: christine.kelley@reading.k12.ma.us



DESE Updates

Did you know...

- DESE offers professional learning networks in a variety of content areas? They are committed to providing opportunities for cross-district collaboration.
- There are new Department of Education Standards that will be published soon in Health. Also being developed are new World Language standards that are set to publish in January 2021.
- The Commissioner sends a weekly update that highlights news from across the state? You can subscribe by going here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/updates.aspx> Clicking on "Commissioner's Updates" and then subscribing.

Parent University is Coming on March 28, 2020

The Community Education Department is sponsoring their 3rd Annual Parent University on March 28, 2020 at RMHS beginning at 8:00 am. We will have a variety of workshops centered around the theme of supporting families and caregivers on our shared mission of raising happy and healthy children. Our keynote address will be offered by Dr. Christopher Willard, a clinical psychologist and author. More information will be coming in the weeks ahead but be sure to save the date! Childcare will be offered and registration for childcare is required. For more information contact Chris Nelson at chris.nelson@reading.k12.ma.us

Registration will be open on 1/27 and may be found here: <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/adult-and-community-education/> and click on the **Register Here** link.



Quote of the Week . . .



"A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of others, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving."

—Albert Einstein

The Parenting Style That Best Fits Growing Brains

By Erin Walsh for [Spark and Stitch Institute](#)

January 13, 2020

There is a lot of talk these days about finding balance. Work-life balance. A balanced diet. Keeping media in balance. In general, balance is a worthy goal.

Parenting, though, often feels like an exercise in grappling with persistent imbalance. Curve balls are constant. Kids are messy, unpredictable, challenging, and delightful. This is in part because their brains are under construction from early childhood all the way through adolescence. Their ability to manage their behaviors, make choices that take other people's feelings and perspectives into account, prioritize, problem solve, and regulate their emotions are all **works-in-progress**. Their ability to manage their feelings and behaviors is also quite variable, depending on all kinds of things including **sleep** and **stress**. Add to the mix that we parents are often "wired but tired" and it's no wonder parenting is often seems like a roller coaster. While our brains might be fully developed our own executive function skills can be more or less difficult to access depending upon how difficult or tiring the day has been.

So when it comes to parenting styles, is balance a meaningful goal?

The answer, according to brain science, is yes. It is hard to remember during a two-year-old temper pushing boundaries or a teenage meltdown, that our kids are walking around in the world with these little miracles perched on top of their shoulders. Their brains are undergoing incredible transformation and are exquisitely designed to learn from their ups and downs.

They are testing out big questions like, "What should I do when I have a big feeling?" or "Does anyone care if I do this?" and "How far can I go?" Research shows that while each of us certainly has a unique way of interacting with our kids and handling challenging behavior, **parenting styles** generally fall into one of three categories: permissive, authoritarian, and yes, balanced.

Permissive

"Anything goes."

- ✦ Few rules.
- ✦ Few consequences.
- ✦ Endless negotiation.
- ✦ Limited or erratic leadership.
- ✦ Emphasis on individuality.
- ✦ All opinions equal.

Balanced

"In charge but flexible."

- ✦ Firm rules.
- ✦ Firm enforcement.
- ✦ Limited negotiation.
- ✦ Stable and consistent leadership.
- ✦ Balance.
- ✦ All opinions respected.

Authoritarian

"My way or the highway."

- ✦ Rigid rules.
- ✦ Strict enforcement.
- ✦ No negotiation.
- ✦ Dominating leadership.
- ✦ Emphasis on conformity.
- ✦ Only parents opinion counts.

The goal informs the means

It turns out that it is precisely because of all the turbulence and growth inside our children that a balanced parenting style is so useful. A couple of key principles in brain science help us understand why:

Disney Quote of the Week



**"Ohana means family.
Family means nobody gets
left behind."**

- Stitch, Lilo & Stitch.

"Whatever the brain does a lot is what the brain gets good at." In other words, the brain learns new skills by practicing.

"The experiences we have during the growth spurts of our brain have a greater impact than at any other times in our lives." In other words, the brain is especially sensitive to experience while it is growing and developing.

With these principles in mind, it becomes more clear why an authoritarian or permissive parenting styles isn't a good match for growing brains. Authoritarian parenting might get kids to comply through fear of punishment, but it doesn't usually allow kids much room to practice. Remember, "Whatever the brain does a lot is what the brain gets good at." The goal isn't simply compliance; the goal is that they ultimately learn how to **manage their emotions** and behaviors themselves.

The permissive approach, on the other hand, isn't a good fit either. If authoritarian parenting robs kids of practice, permissive parenting robs kids of **coaching**. Without **limits and boundaries** it is tough for kids to practice new skills and take responsibility for their impact on others. Shifting limits and uncertain boundaries makes for a chaotic and confusing playing field.

It's not that the authoritarian or permissive parenting styles aren't tempting in the face of challenging behaviors; they just aren't a very good fit for growing brains. Just this morning my five-year-old was particularly poky and emotional getting out the door, rounding out a trying morning where he had spent most of his time in an exhaustive search for the perfect pair of socks (an elusive and ultimately futile endeavor). Late for work, tired of whining, and eager to make sure that both kids weren't late for school I had these two extremes ready to go:

PUT. ON. YOUR. BOOTS!!! OR ELSE.

Okay buddy, you are in charge of footwear, and school for that matter. I'll be here drinking my coffee.

We somehow got out the door without having to employ either extreme. That evening we found our way towards a more balanced approach. He chose an outfit before going to bed, including two pairs of socks from three options I provided. Fingers crossed for tomorrow. I share this example because it is fairly mundane and insignificant. The reality, however, is that parenting is full of mundane and insignificant moments. The most commonplace routines of just getting out the door in the morning can easily turn into explosions, transform us into doormats, or give us opportunities to practice a different way.

Working our way towards the middle

Of course parenting styles aren't just shaped by mood or fatigue. It is also shaped by our training. This past fall a parent shared with me, "I wasn't raised with much balance so I don't know how to do it. My house was full of shouting when I was a kid so I tend to do the opposite when conflict comes up. I just let it go."

I appreciate this kind of real talk. Far from a theoretical exercise, we each bring our own training from our families of origin to our interactions with our kids. There is no one way to parent or single recipe for raising kids. With all the ups and downs, perfect parenting is not the goal. But each of us can find our own unique way towards a balanced approach. In the end, everyone benefits.

Important Websites

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

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

Just like for our children though, new skills require preparation and practice. Outside of conflict and when we aren't about to fly off the handle ourselves, it can be helpful to make a game plan for working towards a more balanced approach. Start small with a few simple questions:

List one challenging behavior.

Brainstorm what an authoritarian, permissive, and balanced response would look like. How would you respond? What would you say? What would your child learn?

Which response most closely resembles your own?

Now name one concrete thing you could do to move towards a more balanced approach.

Don't forget to share your ideas, goals, and progress with a friend or parenting partner. And celebrate your small victories. Did you successfully **draw a boundary**? Hold **your own temper**? Recognize your progress. These are the seemingly insignificant moments through which the best parenting is born.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

By **Dr. Robert Brooks**



In 2018 my wife Marilyn and I saw the documentary “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” that focused on the life of Fred Rogers, more commonly known as “Mister Rogers.” His television show “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” aired nationally for more than 30 years and was watched by millions of children and their parents. And as the years went by, the children of these children became regular viewers. From one generation to the next, his obvious respect for and love of children never wavered.

“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” examined both Mister Rogers’ personal and professional lives. Interviews with those associated with the production of his television show together with observations offered by his wife and two sons allowed us to learn more about a man who drew upon his own childhood experiences to address such important topics as compassion for oneself and others, death, divorce, racism, and terrorism. He never spoke down to his young audience when dealing with these themes. His words were rooted in

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empathy, in an exquisite understanding of the world of children, of their thoughts and feelings.

Mister Rogers proved that one could be direct and forthright in discussing challenging subjects with children and yet comforting at the same time. His kind face, his carefully chosen words, his soft voice all conveyed a sense of reassurance, a feeling that while problems existed in the world, there were many good people who could help children feel secure. In observing Mister Rogers' actions from a resilience lens, I felt he was transmitting a message I often herald in my presentations and writings, namely, resilient children and adults see problems as things to be solved rather than overwhelmed by. His was a message of reason and hope.

In the showing of the documentary that Marilyn and I attended something occurred at its conclusion that is rarely experienced in a movie theater. The audience, comprised of individuals of all ages, spontaneously applauded. Such a response is typical at the conclusion of a live play, but I can't remember the last time I was at a movie that elicited applause. I think the reaction spoke to how moved the audience was by the values of empathy, kindness, and decency so vividly captured by Mister Rogers—qualities that are often lacking in the divisive world in which we live.

"What Would Mister Rogers Do?"

During this past holiday season Marilyn and I went to see "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," a movie in which Mister Rogers is portrayed by Tom Hanks. It is based on a 1998 article written by Tom Junod and published in *Esquire* with the title "Can You Say . . . Hero?" Junod had been assigned to interview Rogers for a special issue that centered on American heroes. The editor requested a 400-word article but, given the relationship that transpired between Junod and Mister Rogers, the final product was considerably longer. Junod recently wrote a piece for the *Atlantic* titled "What Would Mister Rogers Do?" He noted that given some creative liberties taken in the movie, especially in terms of scenes involving his father, he preferred that his real name not be used. Instead, in the movie he is known as Lloyd Vogel. Junod observed that even with this change of name the movie accurately captured the authenticity of the friendship he developed with Mister Rogers and the impact of that friendship on his life.

In the *Atlantic* article Junod recalled, "A long time ago, a man of resourceful and relentless kindness saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. He trusted me when I thought I was untrustworthy, and took an interest in me that went beyond my initial interest in him. He was the first person I ever wrote about who became my friend, and our friendship endured until he died (in 2003)."

Junod recounted that he is frequently asked what Mister Rogers would make of the intense divisiveness and polarization that currently exist in our country and world, of the increase of mass shootings, of the anger and hatred spewed with regularity and impunity on social media towards particular individuals or different ethnic and religious groups—anger that is often translated into acts of violence.

In reflecting upon his interactions with Mister Rogers, Junod was certain that if Mr. Rogers were alive now, his prominent response to today's events would be predicated on a principle that guided his work, asking us to remember, "You were a child once too." Junod asserted that Mister Rogers would express this message to "doctors, politicians, CEOs, celebrities, educators, writers, students, everyone. He wanted us to remember what it was

like to be a child. . . . He would continue to urge us, in what has become one of his most oft quoted lines, to ‘look for the helpers.’”

“Look for the helpers” resonated with me. It reminded me of a basic finding in the resilience literature, namely, how in order to be resilient we require what the late psychologist Julius Segal called a “charismatic adult” in our lives, an adult from “whom we gather strength.” Such adults provide the support and connections we need to feel less lonely and more connected with others, to be more hopeful and resourceful in the face of adversity and turbulent times.

The encouragement of Mister Rogers to “remember what it was like to be a child” touches directly on a theme I have highlighted in my presentations and writings, the importance of being empathic, in seeing the world through the eyes of children or, as he proposes, through the eyes of ourselves when we were children.

I believe that the continued attraction of Mister Rogers almost 17 years after his death and the popularity of both the documentary and the Tom Hanks’ movie provide testimony to the ways in which his messages and outlook are so relevant and welcome during these stress-filled times. For anyone who might question whether or not there is an increased level of stress, a recent survey sponsored by the American Psychological Association and conducted by the Harris Poll confirmed what many of us recognize in our daily lives. The survey found that compared with a similar study in 2016, the level of stress of Americans has risen, especially about such events as the next presidential election, mass shootings, the cost of health care, and racial and ethnic harassment and discrimination.

Lessons from Mister Rogers to Help Us Be True Neighbors

What messages can we take from the work of Mister Rogers as we “look for the helpers”? Shea Tuttle, author of *Exactly as You Are: The Life and Faith of Mister Rogers*, offered her thoughts in an article published by The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California-Berkeley. She wrote, “It seems we sense that Mister Rogers, whom we used to know so well, who used to seem to know *us* so well, may have something to say to us in our divided, contentious, often-painful cultural and political climate.”

Tuttle identified seven “lessons that could help us weather today’s ups and downs, stand up for what we believe in, and come together across our differences.” The following are a list of those lessons together with my brief commentary:

It’s okay to feel whatever it is that we feel. Both positive and negative emotions are part of each person’s life, not to be denied but rather understood and managed. I have heard both my child and adult patients either criticizing themselves for harboring negative feelings or blaming others for the presence of such feelings. No one wants to be told that their feelings are “wrong” or that there is something wrong with them for having certain feelings.

But our feelings aren’t an excuse for bad behavior. Most parents can recall a time they advised their children, “It’s okay to be angry with your brother/sister but not to show your anger by hitting him/her.” A basic developmental task is to learn how to express our feelings in ways that are not physically or emotionally hurtful to others. Sadly, the rhetoric of many politicians and others in leadership positions does not reflect the civility and kindness advocated by Mister Rogers. We must remember, however, that when civility is threatened in society, we must be active in counteracting this situation by taking responsibility for displaying decency in our interaction with others.

Other people are different from us—and just as complex as we are. Tuttle described the significance of this message by noting that when polarization dominates our world we become more vulnerable to demonizing and oversimplifying those with whom we disagree. Mister Rogers reminded his child and adult viewers that we must be careful not to label people as “all good” or “all bad” since such perceptions make it difficult to be empathic and discover common interests and goals.

It’s our responsibility to care for the most vulnerable. I am reminded of a quote often attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, “The greatness of a nation is measured by how it treats its weakest members.” Tuttle observed that Mister Rogers, who was an ordained Presbyterian minister, “took seriously the scripture mandate to care for the most vulnerable. He worked with prisons to create child-friendly spaces for family visitation, sat on hospital boards to minimize trauma in children’s health care, visited people who were sick or dying, and wrote countless letters to the lonely.” I have long advocated that we engage in what I call “contributory” or “charitable” activities that enrich the lives of others and, as importantly, we provide opportunities for our children to do the same. Lecturing children about the importance of being compassionate is a far less effective teaching tool than modeling such behaviors and finding realistic paths for our children to learn about and demonstrate caring.

We can work to make a difference right where we are. How often have we heard the refrain, “I’m just one person, what difference can I make?” Sadly, some people have offered that view for not casting a vote, but we know that one vote can make a difference as a recent election in Boston demonstrated—thousands of votes were cast and the outcome was determined by one vote. The problems we face may at times seem overwhelming, but it is wise to consider the small steps each of us can initiate within our own community to make a difference.

It’s important to make time to care for ourselves. One of my most requested workshops centers on this lesson. I often title it: “Can We Take Care of Our (Students, Children, Patients) if We Don’t Take Care of Ourselves?” As my readers are aware, many of my website articles during the past several years examine practices related to improving our physical and emotional well-being, including regular exercise, a healthier diet, and meditation. If parents and other caregivers feel depleted, it is difficult to help our children become more resilient.

We are neighbors. Tuttle observed that Mister Rogers intentionally used the word “neighbor,” noting, “When Mister Rogers called us neighbors, when he hosted us in his own *Neighborhood* for over 30 years, he was calling us—gently but firmly—*out* of our structures of power and our silos of sameness, *into* lives of mercy and care for another.”

What a powerful message!

Divisiveness, polarization, and lack of civility are not new phenomena. However, the presence of these negative forces seems more evident and more intense than in past years, promulgated and rapidly spread in great part by what most of us consider to be the misuse of social media.

Let us consider the words of Junod at the conclusion of his *Atlantic* article. “That he (Mister Rogers) stands at the height of his reputation 16 years after his death shows the persistence of a certain kind of human hunger—the hunger for goodness.”

I believe that one of the best ways to honor Mister Rogers' legacy and satisfy the hunger for goodness is to reflect and act upon the messages culled from his work by Tuttle.

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:

- 1/17 8:00 a.m. Wood End
- 1/21 2:15 p.m. Parker
- 1/22 12:30 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 Public School Happenings

RMHS High Five For This Week

Below is this week's RMHS High Five.

High Five: Mary Bertocchi

- Favorite Book: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Favorite Quote: "What good are wings without the courage to fly"- Harper Lee
- Favorite Subject: Anatomy
- Activities/Clubs/Sports/Employment: Best Buddies, Rocket Ambassador, Boston Medical Preschool Intern
- Plans for after RMHS: Mary plans to study nursing in college



Mary Bertocchi

High Five: Isabella Pastore

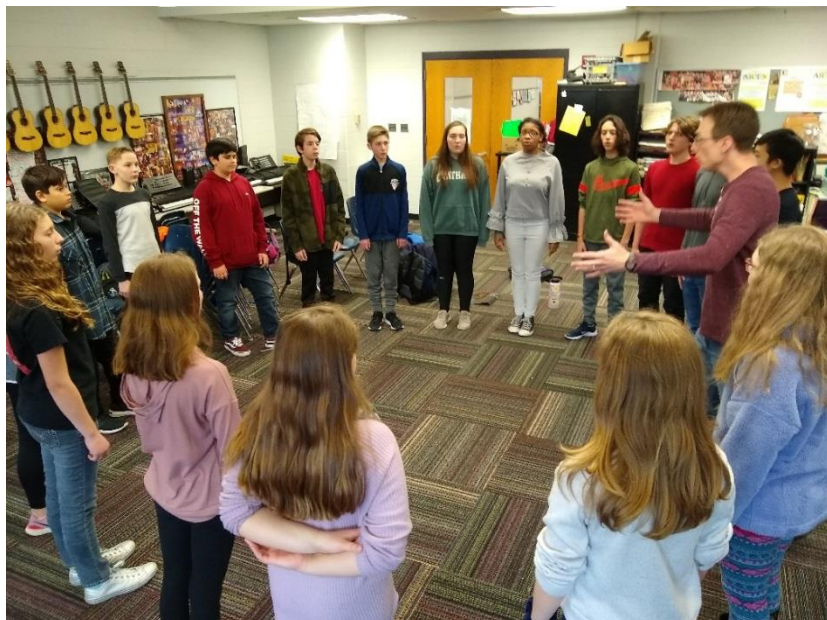
- Favorite Book: To Kill a Mockingbird- Harper Lee
- Favorite Quote: “Never let your memories be greater than your dreams”- Douglas Ivester
- Favorite Subjects: History & French
- Activities/Clubs/Sports/Employment: Cradles to Crayons, Model UN, Sunday Swim, Swim Team
- Plans for after RMHS: Isabella plans to attend college as a political science major



Isabella Pastore

Parker Hosts Guest Clinician

Tom Grant, father of Parker students Quinn and Cole Grant, was the guest clinician for our a cappella rehearsal today. We learned some fun warmups, excellent principles of a cappella singing, and vocal percussion techniques. We are very appreciative of him taking the time to help us. It was great!



Coolidge holds Annual School Geography Bee

On Tuesday, Coolidge Middle School held its Annual School Geography Bee, hosted by National Geographic. Congratulations to winner AJ Palm, to second place finisher Ben Wallace, and to third place recipients Miles Albrecht and Will O'Connor. Other finalists: Jack Nelson, Jake Palm, Ian Planky, Henry Skehan, and Hannah and Johnny Wiggins!



Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Killam teacher **Melissa (Hotchkiss) DeBlois** on her recent marriage.
- Congratulations to RMHS Secretary **Carmen O'Rourke** on the birth of her granddaughter Cecelia Carmen on January 14th weighing 6 lbs. 12 oz. and 21" long.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to former Killam teacher and Joshua Eaton substitute **Rosie Palmer** who lost a loved on recently.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Killam teacher **Karesa Encarnacao** who lost a loved on recently.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to RMHS Assistant Principal/Athletic Director **Tom Zaya** who lost a lost a loved one recently.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Dulce Arellano, Special Education Paraprofessional, Joshua Eaton
 - ✓ Kate Ryan, Extended Day Helper, Birch Meadow
 - ✓ Jane Ryan, Extended Day Helper, Birch Meadow
 - ✓ Vanessa Kraft, Food Service Worker, Joshua Eaton
 - ✓ Shannon Letendre, Extended Day Helper, Wood End
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Special Education Program Paraeducator, 52 hours biweekly, RISE Preschool https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=873
Accounting Assistant (Repost) https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=874
Special Education Paraeducator (one-year), 30 hours biweekly, Killam Elementary School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=875
1.0 FTE Long Term Substitute Teacher, Joshua Eaton Elementary School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=876
1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher, Joshua Eaton Elementary School

https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=877
1.0 FTE Social Studies Teacher, Reading Memorial High School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=879
Town Posting https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/2019_elde_r_human_service_administrator.pdf
https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/2020_public_health_nurse_dec.-_public_services.pdf

Blazing Trails...

"The Language of Teacher Leadership." In this ASCD Educational Leadership article, it's easy to get excited when we hear the term "teacher leadership." Teachers hope it means they will have a voice in decision making and possibly even receive a boost in their salaries. Principals believe it will lighten their own workload while improving school culture. District leaders expect it will represent a commitment to career advancement that attracts and retains the best teachers. And everyone expects that teacher leadership will have a positive impact on student learning. However, the research is largely inconclusive on whether and under what conditions teacher leadership impacts student learning. [Read More](#)

"PBS Virtual Live Learning Event: Teaching the Civil War Through A New Lens." Educators, you're invited to an exclusive live conversation with Dr. Henry Louis Gates! This one-hour conversation will explore topics on the lasting impact of the American Civil War, the period of Reconstruction that followed, and the ways in which these historical events continue to impact our nation's psyche. [Read More](#)

"Five Educational Trends to Watch For in 2020." This article highlights five K-12 education trends to watch for in 2020. They include additional changes in assessments and balancing student safety with their privacy. [Read More](#)

"Laugh, Cry And Gasp Along With The Best Viral Classroom Moments of 2019." A number of moments in US schools and classrooms shared online went viral in 2019. This article highlights 10 such moments, including California school resource officer Ryan Tillman's farewell dance medley with students, which was viewed 117,000 times on YouTube. [Read More](#)

"How Traveling Can Help Students Learn." Students can continue their learning while traveling for vacation, according to Florence Monique Boulard, associate dean at James Cook University. In this commentary, she writes that traveling can help expose students to other cultures and new experiences and suggests several ways to make sure the trips are educational. [Read More](#)

"Educator Explains Another PBL: 'Phenomenon-Based Learning.'"

Petteri Elo leads his students in Finland through nine-week interdisciplinary projects called "phenomenon-based learning," in which students have control over the project, use transferable skills and explore topics that interest them. Elo says teachers using this technique must shift between traditional and hands-off teaching based on student needs, and provide fundamental knowledge so students can develop their own research questions. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Long Weekend and Week Ahead!