



# Pathways

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

February 28, 2020

Volume 11, Number 18

## Upcoming Dates

- March 3 – Local Election and Presidential Primary in the Hawkes Field House
- March 6 & 7 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Winter Play – “A View from the Bridge” in the Endslo PAC
- March 8 – (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Winter Play – “A View from the Bridge” in the Endslo PAC
- March 10 – (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Jazz Festival @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting in the Schettini Library
- March 11 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release
- March 12 – (6:30 p.m.) Parker Musical – “The Little Mermaid, Jr.”
- March 13 – (7:00 p.m.) Parker Musical – “The Little Mermaid, Jr.”; Misster RMHS in the Endslo Pac
- March 14 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing @ RMHS; (2:00 p.m.) Parker Musical – “The Little Mermaid, Jr.”
- March 16 – RMHS Spring Sports begin; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Grade 5 Transition Night
- March 19 – (6:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library
- March 20 – No School for Students; Reading Spring Institute
- March 21 – (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Sophomore Semiformal in the Cafeteria
- March 23 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Schettini Library
- March 25 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release

## Letter to School Community Regarding Coronavirus

Dear Reading Public School Community,

As you know, there has been increasing concern globally regarding the recent outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) or COVID-19. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has shared guidance for school administrators and school health personnel. As of this writing, Massachusetts has one confirmed case of COVID-19 and the risk to our residents remains low. In the US, there are only 64 cases confirmed. At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high. It is important to note that residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to COVID-19.

We want to let you know that we are following our regular protocols for respiratory illnesses and are in contact with town and state officials. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control has released information regarding the COVID-19 virus and influenza. The links to that information is below.

[www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus](http://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19#-printable-fact-sheets>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

We also have information on our school district health services website.

<https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/health-services/>

While this is a public health concern, the CDC continues to report that the immediate risk to the general public remains low at this time. Yet, in today's connected world, the potential for infectious disease is always of concern. As with seasonal flu and strep infections, there are general precautions we can all take to remain as healthy as possible.

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use Alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. You can also cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick whenever possible.
- Practice other good health habits: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

- March 26 – (7:00 p.m.)  
School Committee Meeting  
in the Schettini Library

It is important to keep children home from school when they are ill. If your child has any of the following symptoms please keep them home from school: temperature greater than 100.4, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, any rash not yet diagnosed by a physician, red or pink itchy eye, and/or drainage from eye, and any contagious illness such as chicken pox, strep throat or flu.

The Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is an evolving situation that we are following closely and will continue to update you as information is shared with us. Please rest assured that we are monitoring student health concerns. We are in close communication with the local Board of Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health/School Health Unit, as well as pediatric health care providers in the community. Our School Facilities Department is following our normal cleaning protocol for our educational spaces as we typically do during cold and flu season. We are following all recommended guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

We remain deeply committed to student and staff wellness and will continue to share new information with you, as necessary, about this evolving situation.

If you have any questions, please contact your school nurse or building principal.

Sincerely,

Superintendent of Schools John Doherty

Director of Nurses, Mary Giuliana

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## SEPAC Updates

The Reading Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) encourages you to attend the following upcoming events:

- **Thursday, March 5th 7PM Parent Social at Biltmore & Main.**
- **Tuesday, March 10th 7PM SEPAC business meeting in the RMHS Schettini Library Media Center.** Dr. Doherty and Dr. Stys will be in attendance to provide updates and ask for input. As always, there will be time for public comment. Agenda forthcoming.
- **Wednesday, April 1st 10AM daytime SEPAC business meeting in the Reading PUBLIC Library conference room.** Family-friendly engagement opportunity for parents and caregivers who cannot attend evening meetings. Agenda forthcoming.

Visit [SEPAC's website](#) and follow [SEPAC on Facebook](#) for more information!

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## Killam Turns 50 Years Old!

We will be celebrating Killam's 50th Anniversary on April 14th! In preparing for the festivities, the Killam 50th Celebration Committee is reaching out to past Killam students. If you or a family member attended Killam and would like to share memorabilia or stories from your time at Killam, please contact [Sarah Leveque](#).

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## Superintendent Office Hours For This Week

Continuing this week, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty will hold office hours at the different schools. Superintendent Office Hours will be scheduled for 30 minutes and are

## Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the RMHS wrestlers Colton Blomquist, Dana Isbell, Matthew Hammond and Trevion Atallah for strong showings in the Division 2 North Sectional Wrestling Tournament.
- Good luck to RMHS wrestlers Colton Blomquist and Matthew Hammond who have moved on from the State Tournament to the All State Tournament this weekend.
- Kudos to the gymnastics team on a strong third place finish at the North Sectional meet.
- Congratulations to the girls hockey & girls basketball teams on a first round win in the MIAA tournament.

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:

3.03.20 8:15 a.m. RMHS

3.04.20 4:30 p.m. Superintendent's Office

3.06.20 7:15 a.m. Parker

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](mailto:linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us).

## They grow up so fast. Now's your chance to shape their future.



**A kindergartener counted in the 2020 Census this spring will be starting high school when the next census comes around in 2030: That's 10 years of school supplies, teachers, school lunches, and so much more. This is your opportunity to help ensure they have a bright future.**

Right now, students across the country are getting an introduction to the 2020 Census through the Statistics in Schools program. This program offers free activities and resources to schools to help prepare their students for an increasingly data-driven world.

Students are learning that the 2020 Census is a count of every person who lives in the United States and its territories. Responding to the census helps your community get its fair share of funding. Census data guides how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year for schools, health care facilities, roads, transportation, recreation centers, social services, and more.

**Students are also learning these key things about the 2020 Census—and we want you to know them too:**

- Starting in March 2020, everyone living in your home needs to be counted. That includes children and newborn babies, citizens and noncitizens, relatives and nonrelatives, and even those staying with you temporarily.
- It's easier than ever to respond to the census. You can respond in 13 different languages, and you can complete it online, by phone, or by mail.
- Your responses to the census are safe and secure. The law requires the U.S. Census Bureau to keep your information confidential, and your responses cannot be used against you in any way.

**You have the power to shape your future, and the future of all children, by counting everyone in your home in the 2020 Census.**

Learn more about how you can shape your future at [2020CENSUS.GOV](https://2020CENSUS.GOV).

Get more information about the Statistics in Schools program at [CENSUS.GOV/SCHOOLS](https://CENSUS.GOV/SCHOOLS).



Shape  
your future  
START HERE >

United States  
Census  
2020

**Superintendent's Office**  
**Half-Hours this Week**

*All are welcome*

3.03.20 8:15 a.m.  
RMHS

3.04.20 4:30 p.m.  
Superintendent's  
Office

3.06.20 7:15 a.m.  
Parker

## Reaching Students with Disabilities

In this *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Kara Ball recalls when she was a 10th-grader standing at the board trying unsuccessfully to solve a math problem. Finally the teacher said, loudly enough for the whole class to hear, “You’re stupid and are never going to amount to anything.” This was not the first time Ball had been publicly humiliated, and it almost pushed her over the edge. “I could have accepted every negative assumption ever made about me because of my dyslexia and dyscalculia,” she says. “But rather than dropping out or giving in, I decided at that moment that I wanted to be a teacher – and not just any teacher but a special education teacher.”

Ball didn’t outgrow her disabilities, but she got better at dealing with them, graduating from high school and college. She’s now a Baltimore science/STEM education specialist; in 2018 she was named a State Teacher of the Year and was one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year. Based on her unique perspective, Ball has ideas for parents and fellow educators on how to bring out the potential of every student:

- *Be empathetic.* “I wish my 10th-grade math teacher had understood just how badly I wanted to be the student *he* wanted me to be,” says Ball. “As educators, it’s essential for us to understand that our students with disabilities can’t control how and in what way their disability affects them.” Students with the same diagnosis may stumble in different ways. A different teacher in her high school advocated for Ball to enroll in an honors science class despite her C average. This started Ball on the path to becoming a science teacher like him.
- *Don’t rely on rote learning.* Ball’s limited short-term memory means that she’s not good at mental math or storing and recalling information, especially new concepts – unless they’re connected to a visual or hands-on activity. “None of this means that I’m confused about the given mathematical concepts,” she says. But it’s essential to find another way to build understanding.
- *Make it visual.* Ball gives her own students blueprint paper to work through engineering design problems and encourages them to make “doodle notes” to visually represent new equations and vocabulary. “A student like me might not be able to solve an abstract problem written on a blackboard,” she says, “but the same problem, presented in a different visual format, can be less of a struggle.”
- *Make connections to the real world.* Ball’s father worked with her to build a treehouse in their backyard, teaching her about saws, levels, plumb lines, and the importance of precise measurements. “I have found that students with disabilities who struggle in other academic areas tend to excel in STEM because of the connections they make to the real world,” she says. “Plus, STEM encourages students to take risks, make mistakes, and work through problems – something students with disabilities are familiar with.”
- *Allow voice and choice.* Ball believes that if her 10th-grade math teacher had allowed her to solve that problem on paper first, perhaps using her notes, she would have had the confidence to go to the board and succeed in front of the class. With her own



### Quote of the Week . . .



“Consciously or unconsciously everyone of us does render some service...If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only our own happiness, but that of the world at large.”

– Mahatma Ghandi

students, Ball has students keep notebooks tuned to their specific needs, and frequently gives them choices in how to solve problems and show what they’ve learned.

- *Embrace assistive technology.* When Ball was in sixth grade, she repeatedly failed a crucial math test and was in danger of being kept back. Fortunately her parents insisted on having her assessed, and once dysgraphia was diagnosed, she was able to take the test with assistive technology and passed the first time. The key was being able to read the directions aloud, enlarge the print, and get calculator support when computation wasn’t being assessed. “As educators,” she says, “we have to embrace the reality that accommodations like assistive technology aren’t cheating; rather, they help to level the playing field.”

“Why My Learning Disabilities Make Me a Better Teacher” by Kara Ball in *Phi Delta Kappan*, February 2020 (Vol. 101, #5, pp. 58-59), available for purchase at <https://bit.ly/2v2SQ7V>; Ball can be reached at [ontheballedu@gmail.com](mailto:ontheballedu@gmail.com).

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## Reading Public School Happenings

### RMHS High Five of the Week

Congratulations to RMHS Senior Tatiana Burcy who is this week’s RMHS High Five of the Week.



Tatiana Burcy

- **Favorite Book:** *Divergent* by Veronica Roth
- **Favorite Quote:** “For every dark night, there’s a brighter day.” Tupac Shakur
- **Favorite Subjects:** Art and Poetry
- **Activities/Clubs/Sports/Employment:** Tatiana plays of RMHS softball, RBI and plays tournament ball in the summer
- **Plans for after RMHS:** Tatiana plans to pursue a degree in the dental field

### RMHS Gymnastics Team

Congratulations to the RMHS Gymnastics Team on a very successful season! The team had an undefeated season and earned the Middlesex League Championship. Below are some individual achievements from the recent league meet.

### Disney Quote of the Week



"If watching is all you're gonna do, then you're gonna watch your life go by without ya."

— Laverne, The Hunchback of Notre Dame

### **Sophia Isbell**

League Meet  
Vault-1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Bars-1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Beam-1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Floor-1<sup>st</sup> Place  
All-Around-1<sup>st</sup> Place

### **Hannah Whitney**

Beam-2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
All-Around-2<sup>nd</sup> Place

### **Rachel Spezzafero**

Floor-2<sup>nd</sup> Place



RMHS Gymnastics Team

### **Stepping Stones...**

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
  - ✓ Benjamin Oyer, Home Hospital Tutor, District
  - ✓ Derek Galante, Business Teacher, RMHS
  - ✓ Suzanne Quinlivan, Long Term Substitute Grade 5 Teacher, Joshua Eaton
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Director of Finance
<a href="https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=908">https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=908</a>
Town Posting

## Important Websites

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

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

[https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/2020\\_laborer\\_-\\_highway.pdf](https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/2020_laborer_-_highway.pdf)

## Blazing Trails...

**"How Can Schools Work to Achieve Digital Equity?"** Technology needs to support collaboration, critical thinking, communication and creativity to help achieve digital equity in the classroom, says Diane Doersch, of the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative. Teachers should use technology to personalize learning and have an edtech plan in place before purchasing or having students use new devices, while districts should provide professional development on best practices for digital equity, other experts say. [Read More](#)

**"Drawing on Reading Science Without Starting a War."** Recent research into reading has revealed much about how people learn to read, and Benjamin Riley, founder and executive director of Deans for Impact, expresses optimism that educators might adopt much of this reading science into how they teach reading without triggering new "reading wars" between advocates of phonics and whole language. Read his suggestions for how to advocate for "reading science" in the latest issue of ASCD's Educational Leadership. [Read More](#)

**"Local Massachusetts Students Get First-Hand Learning at the State House."** A group of fifth- and sixth-grade students in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, recently visited state lawmakers to deliver letters and support a group of immigrants who are protesting at the state capitol. The students took the actions after reading Alexandra Diaz's "The Only Road" and hearing talks from members of the Movimiento Cosecha about the hardships undocumented people face if they cannot obtain a driver's license. [Read More](#)

**"Does 'Turn and Talk' Help Students Learn?"** Interaction can help students learn, but prompts for students to "turn and talk" to a partner or in a small group also can be a waste of time, as students can get off topic, don't talk at all or dominate a discussion, author Natalie Wexler asserts. In this commentary, she suggests replacing "turn and talk" with a call for students to "reflect and write." [Read More](#)

**"Students Learn Global Citizenship: Indonesian Schools, Businesses Raise Funds for Australian Bushfires."** Students in Indonesia are participating in school-led fundraisers to help support people in Australia, who have been affected by bushfires that first broke out last year. Linawati Lauw, principal at Bina Bangsa, said in a letter to parents that the exercise teaches students to be "global citizens" and learn about the world. [Read More](#)

## Contact Us

*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](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)

**Have a Great Weekend and Week Ahead!**