Reading Hosts EPA Press Conference at RMHS

On Wednesday, Reading Memorial High School was one of four sites in the country to host a press conference by the Environmental Protection Agency to present a $967,000 grant to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and to outline new lead and copper rules for water testing. Reading was chosen as a site because of the proactive and collaborative work that they have done in lead and copper water testing over the last several years.

EPA Officials Presenting a Check for $967,000 to Massachusetts DEP

 Speakers for the event included
- Town Manager Bob Lelacheur
- U.S. EPA Regional Administrator Dennis Deziel
- Massachusetts DEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg
- Massachusetts State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg
- Executive Director MWRA Fred Laskey
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. John Doherty
Over the last several years, in collaboration with the water department and facilities department, the Town of Reading and Reading Public Schools have put together an aggressive lead/copper water testing and mitigation program in our schools which has become a model throughout our region. This program is an interdepartmental effort based on full transparency, timely communication, and immediate response. The result of this program is due to the hard work of Water Quality & DPW Safety Administrator Erik J. Mysliwy, Director of Facilities Joe Huggins, Assistant Director of Facilities Kevin Cabuzzi, and Chief Financial Officer Gail Dowd. In addition we would also like to recognize the leadership Town Manager Bob LeLacheur and DPW Director Jane Kinsella for their efforts in working collaboratively with our schools to ensure a safe environment for our students.

The press release from yesterday is below.

CONTACT:
David Deegan (News Media Only)
deeegan.dave@epa.gov
(617) 918-1017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 10, 2019

EPA Awards $967,000 to Massachusetts to Test Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Facilities

BOSTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) New England office today awarded a $967,000 grant to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to support testing of drinking water in schools and child care programs, to ensure that children are not being exposed to lead in the water they consume.
Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to boys soccer, field hockey, football, boys cross country, swimming and volleyball for wins this week.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Marching Band on a silver medal performance at last week’s competition in Melrose.

The funding, authorized under a section of the national Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (the WIIN Act), aims to reduce children’s exposure to elevated lead in drinking water. The EPA grant is an important piece of an overall Lead Action Plan to reduce lead in all media, including where children live, play, and learn.

“Protecting children from exposure to lead is critically important to EPA,” said EPA Region 1 Administrator Dennis Deziel. “Each October we celebrate Children’s Health Month, so EPA is especially pleased that this grant will support the Commonwealth’s efforts to detect and reduce lead in drinking water, thereby protecting children’s health at schools and elsewhere.”

“The Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program is the Commonwealth’s nation-leading effort to keep children in schools and child care programs safe from the adverse health impacts of lead from water fountains and faucets,” said MassDEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg.

“Nearly 1,000 school buildings in 150 communities sampled for lead in the first two rounds of the program, and we are grateful to the U.S. EPA for providing this additional funding to allow more schools and day care centers to test for this potential contaminant in drinking water.”

As Chair of the Clean Water Trust, I am pleased to partner with the EPA, Mass DEP, and the MWRA on this critical work. This generous grant from the EPA will allow us to continue testing lead and copper levels in schools and daycares, underscoring the importance of investing in water infrastructure, especially when it comes to our children’s health and safety,” said Massachusetts Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg.

“This is a very positive development and EPA has taken a comprehensive and aggressive view,” said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey.

The EPA grant will continue and expand the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water, a nationally-recognized program that has already helped almost 1,000 public schools and child care programs take proactive steps to find and get the lead out of drinking water. MassDEP, in collaboration with UMass-Amherst, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and other partners, will use the funds to communicate, train, test, and take action in schools in high risk communities throughout the Commonwealth.


Superintendent Office Hours Continue This Week

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

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

10/16  8:00-8:30 a.m.  Wood End
10/17  2:45-3:15 p.m.  RMHS
10/21  7:30 a.m.  Parker
10/23  12:15 p.m.  Birch Meadow
10/28  2:30 p.m.  Killam
10/29  2:30 p.m.  Barrows

No appointment is necessary. If you are attending an office hour, please go to the Main Office of the school that is holding the office hour.
If you cannot make one of the advertised office hour times and you would like to schedule an appointment with Dr. Doherty, feel free to call the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices at 781-944-5800 or contact Linda Engelson at linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us.

**Superintendent’s Office**

**Half-Hours this Week**

*All are welcome*

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**READING, MA**

**TOWN MEETING 101**

Monday, November 4th, 7pm

Library Community Room

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

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

Questions?

Email Jen Hillery | jenniferchillery@gmail.com

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**Reading Institute Fall-Course Begins on October 15th**

This course is FREE and starts on 10/15. Reserve your spot now! Registration is first come-first served and should be done asap.

Back by popular demand...we are once again offering this wonderful course taught by our EL teacher, Karen Hall. This course meets the requirements for SEI pdps (required for recertification but different from SEI endorsement) and may be eligible for Graduate Credit (details will come once you register).

*This course is also now part of our mentoring expectations for new staff and will be re-offered seasonally.*

For more information, please contact Asst. Superintendent, Chris Kelley

REGISTRATION FORM LINK
Equity for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners
By Karen Hall, English Learner Teacher

Instructional Methods: Lecture, readings, small and whole group discussions, homework assignments, and independent/small group work

Audience: Pre-K-12 Educators, Administrators

15 Instructional Hours:
- 12 hours of face-to-face classes (6 class sessions x 2 hours each)
- 3 hours of homework

Schedule: 6 Tuesdays, 3:30-5:30 pm
10/15, 10/22, 11/12, 11/19, 12/10, 12/17

Location: Killam ART room

Sessions 1-2: Culturally Competent Teaching and Learning
These sessions will support educators to increase their cultural proficiency in the classroom. We will discuss how culture impacts student identity and academic achievement before reflecting on our own cultural profiles. Participants will then learn about common cultural differences between school culture and the home cultures of culturally and linguistically diverse students. A read and reflect activity will allow educators to evaluate their own cultural competence and explore additional ways to value and affirm students’ home cultures. We will then discuss the practical applications of cultural competency and analyze real life case studies to put it into practice.

Sessions 3-4: Striving for an Equitable Curriculum for Diverse Students
Educators will examine how to implement a more equitable curriculum for culturally and linguistically diverse students. We will explore the various forms of bias in instructional materials and will reflect on how to overcome the bias. We will then discuss how integrating social justice can lead to a more equitable curriculum. Finally, educators will work to find bias-free materials and overlay the social justice standards in their own curriculum.

Sessions 5-6: Breaking Down Racial Inequities in Schools
Participants will examine sources of racial injustice that undermine equity in our schools. We will identify our own implicit biases and examine the impact of bias in schools. Our discussion of racial inequities will move from the individual to the systemic level, on topics including microaggressions, white privilege, and school funding. Finally, we will reflect on what it means to be an equitable educator and action steps we can take to get there.

Final Project
Participants will write a reflection on their current practice in relation to cultural proficiency and equity. They will then create an action plan to increase cultural competence and equity at the individual, classroom, and school/district level.

Pulse of Reading Conversation Next Week
Pulse of Reading: Building Our Community

How will Reading continue to grow and develop? What can you do to help build the Reading community? Join us in a deeper dive conversation about what small and large scale community actions will work to spark inspiration, innovation, and meaningful connections. This two hour session will follow the traditional World Cafe meeting format. You will be asked to break out into small groups. As the event progresses, you will change tables, meet new people and discuss different questions designed to help identify shared community values and concerns. This event is on Thursday, October 17th from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the Reading Public Library Community Room A and B.

You can pre-register for this event at https://libcal.readingpl.org/event/5372783.
“The Pessimist Sees Difficulty In Every Opportunity. The Optimist Sees Opportunity In Every Difficulty.”

– Winston Churchill

Working Toward a Safe Classroom Space

In this article in American Educator, Philadelphia teacher/author Matthew Kay says that among progressive educators, a top priority is making their classroom a “safe space” – bullying is prevented, sensitive topics (including race) are discussed, students feel they can take risks, and introverts speak. This kind of culture won’t magically happen as the result of good intentions and a bold proclamation at the beginning of the year (“My name is Mr. Kay, and I want you to consider this
The Way Get Started Is To Quit Talking And Begin Doing.”

- Walt Disney

Classroom a **safe space**

Rather, it requires several weeks of patient instruction and modeling of three discussion guidelines, and keeping on it for the whole year:

- **Listen patiently.** “The more we care about a topic of conversation, the more we rush to speak,” says Kay. “The less we care, the less we feel obligated to pay attention to conversational partners who do.” Kay makes a point of teaching his students how to act while a classmate is speaking, starting with:
  - Hands are not to be raised while someone is still talking; waving one’s hand in the air at this point rushes the speaker and says, “I wish you would shut up! I have my own thing to say!”
  - No interruptions. Wanting to share a eureka moment, even show agreement, is a healthy sign of engagement, but students must learn to restrain themselves and wait their turn (and must feel confident that their turn will come).

Working within these nonnegotiable rules, students learn to use other approaches — eye contact, nodding, smiling, pursing their lips in thought — which they’ll appreciate classmates using when it’s their turn to have the floor.

- **Listen actively.** Kay suggests having students jot in their notebooks to capture the thread of a discussion, or having someone write the sequence on the board. He teaches students to start their comments with a connector (“Building on her point...”) and praises those who listen to and follow up on a peer’s ideas as much as the initiator: “Joe said ---, which inspired Mike to tell this story, which Marcia thought related to this character in the play. After she made this connection Tanya told us about this book she read that seems to back up Joe’s thesis. I love the way you all are building.”

- **Keep the conversation balanced.** “Early in the school year, I constantly nudge my students to turn their faces away from me when answering a question,” says Kay, “looking instead at peers. The reminder is gentle, and often excited, as if I am trying to say, *What you are saying is too good for just me to hear. Let’s get everyone else in on this stuff!*” It’s also important for students to speak succinctly, not repeat themselves, and avoid sermonettes. Of course that goes for the teacher as well.

Kay concludes by reflecting on “house talk.” As a kid, he understood this term to mean that certain topics shouldn’t be discussed outside the family. As an adult, he’s noticed that there’s a tendency for groups dealing with an emotionally fraught incident or history to believe that outsiders can’t understand what they are going through and avoid discussing it outside the “house.” Kay gives three examples:

- In the wake of the 2014 killing of Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, African-American students at Kay’s school were reluctant to discuss the incident with white teachers and classmates, believing they simply could not understand the depths of their anger and fear.
- Apropos the street harassment many of his female students experience on a daily basis, Kay says, “It would be hubris for me to expect every girl to feel
comfortable sharing her anger, embarrassment, or shame with me. What is academic to me is visceral to them... It’s equally understandable if these girls don’t want to deal with the annoyance of reassuring male classmates who might answer ‘Not all men’ to their protestations.”

• In the middle of a meticulously planned unit on the Holocaust, Kay managed to get a copy of a book of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda that would make dramatically clear the evil of the German war machine. Full of history-nerd enthusiasm, he said to his students, “This is a beautiful thing!” “Beautiful?” said a Jewish student whose great-grandparents had escaped the Holocaust. Kay was mortified that he was “capable of such a terrific blunder, one that I would be considerably less likely to make if I were Jewish, and not merely a well-meaning black ally.”

Kay cautions that teachers who have created a safe space in their classrooms, holding open discussions with patient, active listening and balanced voices, may be lulled into believing they can venture into topics that some students believe are house talk. “We must, if we value our students’ right to determine healthy relationships, never accept invitations unless they are proffered,” he says. “We must, through earnest humility, earn our seats. Just as we cannot conjure safe spaces from midair, we should not expect the familial intimacy, vulnerability, and forgiveness needed for meaningful race conversations to emerge from traditional classroom relationships... We may not always be invited to engage in house talk, but our odds increase once we create an environment of humility and genuine interest in each other’s lives and passions. This is the sort of real safe space I try to build in my classroom, a not-so-magical notion that has opened the door to rich and meaningful race conversations – and deep, empathetic learning.”


Bite-Sized Lessons in Social-Emotional Learning

In this Education Week article, Arianna Prothero reports that many educators feel overwhelmed by the scope and expense of full-blown social-emotional learning curriculum packages. Stephanie Jones and her colleagues at Harvard University’s EASEL laboratory (Ecological Approaches to Social-Emotional Learning, https://easel.gse.harvard.edu/people) saw this as an impediment to important SEL skills being taught in schools. “Folks wanted to do it,” she says, “but they wanted it to be integrated in the instructional work they are already doing. We began to think about the problem of implementation by brainstorming ways to do SEL in little bites, in small, routine, structure-based ways you could imbed in a school in a way that is harder to do with a curriculum.”

What emerged were 10-minute “kernels,” brief routines that teachers could squeeze into their busy days when the need arose – for example, students bringing recess
conflicts into the classroom. Three examples:

- **Magic 8 Ball**, a discussion strategy building problem-solving skills (all grades) – The teacher asks, “If a person does X, what might happen?” Students then look into their imaginary magic 8 balls and give potential consequences of the action, as well responses in other situations. The teacher follows up by asking students if they see these actions as positive, negative, or neutral, and in which other situations they might need to imagine an outcome.

- **Dear Abby**, a discussion strategy that helps students make responsible, ethical, healthy choices in difficult situations (fifth grade) – Students read a real-world dilemma from an advice column and discuss solutions in small groups or in a role-play. Students are asked if they need additional information to better understand the dilemma, and how other characters in the scenario might see the situation.

- **Belly breathing**, a calming technique for emotion/behavior management (all grades) – Students breathe deeply through their noses, notice their bellies expand, then exhale through their mouths and notice how their bellies contract. Do they feel differently? When might this be a useful strategy?


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**Reading Public School Happenings**

**RMHS High Fives For This Week**
Below are the RMHS High Fives for the last two weeks. Thanks to RMHS Teacher Steven McCarthy for providing this information.

**Catherine Mullin (Class of 2020)**
Favorite Book: “The Honest Truth” by Dan Gemeinhart
Favorite Quote: “It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.” - Epictetus
Favorite Subjects: Math & Science
Activities/Clubs/Sports: Cradles to Crayons, National Honor Society & Environmental Club
Volunteer Experience: Sunday Swim
Plans for after High School: United States Air Force Military Intelligence/ Engineering

Julianna Ferreiros, Class of 2020

Favorite Book: The Hate You Give by Angie Thomas
Favorite Quote: “I only follow my voice inside/ if it guides me wrong and I do not win/ I'll learn from mistakes and try 2 achieve again.” If I Fall by Tupac Shakur
Favorite Subjects: English & Science
Activities/Clubs/Sports: National Honor Society
Volunteer Experience: Volunteers weekly at Reading Food Pantry and Adopt-A-Trail
Plans for after High School: Julianna plans on pursuing Health Science in college with hopes of becoming a physician. Julianna plans to volunteer her time during her college years focusing on helping domestic abuse survivors, homelessness, animals, and environmental issues.

RMHS Volleyball Team Headed to State Tournament
Congratulations to the RMHS Girls Volleyball Team who qualified for the MIAA Division 1 State Tournament later this fall. The team has five matches remaining with two at the RMHS Walter Hawkes Field House. The remaining home matches are as follows:

Friday- October 18
Our annual Volley for the Cure Match- proceeds benefiting the MGH-ESSCO Breast Cancer Research Fund.

Wednesday, October 23
Annual senior night. We will be honoring 9 seniors!
Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Wood End teacher **Kaitlyn Rubin**, who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Birch Meadow Paraeducator **Jodi Cirrone** who lost a family member recently.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Coolidge Assistant Principal **Brie Karow** who lost a family member recently.
- Congratulations to Killam teacher **Laurie Truesdale** on the birth of her daughter Aurelia on October 1st weighing 8 lbs., 8 oz. and 20 inches long.

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
  - Katie Caporale, Food Service Substitute, District
  - Erline Trites, LTS Special Education Paraeducator, Killam
  - Katherine Boucher, Substitute, District

- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx to view the job detail and apply:
  - Special Education Paraeducator (Learning Center), 60 hours biweekly, Parker Middle School
  - Long-Term Substitute Program Para, 50 hours biweekly, Wood End Elementary School
  - Special Education Program Paraeducator, 43 hours biweekly, Birch Meadow Elementary School
  - Regular Educator Paraeducator, 35 hours biweekly, Joshua Eaton Elementary School
Blazing Trails...
"Using Real-World Community Issues for True Learning." Assignments that let students address community challenges -- such as advocating for school funding -- can help them connect classroom lessons to the world around them, according to educator Cathleen Beachboard. In this blog post, she shares how she establishes a Community Problems Bank and addresses the issues with the whole class or in small groups. Read More

"How you Talk to your Child Might Make Them Smarter." Why is it that higher income kids tend to score better on achievement tests than poor kids, even at the youngest ages? One explanation from the 1990s is the so-called 30-million word gap, in which researchers observed how higher income parents talked to their kids more and estimated that low income kids heard 30 million in this post from The Hechinger Report. Read More

"Massachusetts Principal Seeks to be Role Model for Students." New Kingston Intermediate School principal Mike Bambery says he will be very deliberate about making any changes and praises his staff for their dedication to students. Bambery, who held the assistant principal job at the school for the past four years, says he looks forward to having more time to be a role model for students. Read More

"Whom Do American Adults Really Trust? Survey says: School Principals." Whom do American adults trust the most when it comes to providing fair and accurate information, caring about people and responsibly managing resources? A new survey by the nonprofit Pew Research Center has an answer that may - or may not - surprise you. It's not military or religious leaders. The most trusted are K-12 public school principals, according to the survey and report with its details, titled, "Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility." Read More

"US has Fewer Ph.D. Grads than Other Countries." US colleges and universities may be falling behind in enrolling and graduating domestic Ph.D. students, according to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The data shows that the US is lagging behind countries such as Germany, South Korea and the United Kingdom, and experts say it could imperil future research. Read More

Have a Great Week!