



# **District Highlights**

An informational newsletter showcasing news and events of the North Reading Public Schools

**Summer**

**2015-2016**

## **Superintendent's Message**

It is my pleasure to present to you this edition of the North Reading Public Schools' Superintendent's newsletter.

With the 2015-2016 school year recently concluded, I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the community of North Reading for its unwavering support of public education and for the students and staff of our school district.

It is with great pride and humility that I accepted the offer to assume the position of Superintendent of Schools of this wonderful school district on October 18, 2014. I found the years that I served as the principal of North Reading High School (July 1, 2003 through October 17, 2014) to be extremely rewarding, both personally and professionally. To be provided the opportunity to serve as Superintendent of Schools is a tremendous honor.

Over the years, I have been witness to a great many things that speak so well of our students and educators and the support that the community as a whole has provided that allows for a comprehensive academic and co-curricular program at all levels.

My entire career in public education before becoming your Superintendent of Schools was spent at the high school level (English teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal); therefore, I believe that I had a very good grasp of the high school dynamic...and it is wonderful. Since becoming Superintendent, I have so enjoyed bearing witness to the good work that is taking place at all levels in our district, and I have particularly enjoyed getting to learn more about the work that is taking place in our three elementary schools and in our middle school. I have quickly become impressed with the high level of academic rigor and lofty expectations for our students; the caring and supportive culture in our schools; the broad range of co-curricular opportunities; the integration of technology as a teaching and learning tool; the many opportunities for our students to demonstrate their knowledge and their talents, particularly through theater, music, art, humanities, science, and athletics; the service projects that our students undertake in order to better their school and community (and the valuable lessons learned from these engaging experiences); and the generous support of parents and the citizens at large.

At nearly every School Committee meeting, I am afforded the opportunity to present for acceptance "gifts" to the school department that are made on behalf of individuals and groups that provide valuable resources to be used in classrooms or otherwise support and enhance the daily work in our schools. It is amazing to me how generous and supportive the community is and how hard-working our Parents Associations and other support organizations are to the benefit of our students.

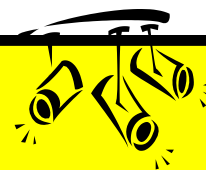
Last September, the community celebrated the opening of our new high school; this coming fall, we will cut the ribbon to ceremonially open the new North Reading Middle School to complete a beautiful, new, grades 6-12 secondary school campus. These two new beautiful schools are a wonderful testament to the commitment that the community makes on behalf of its young people. And there are so many other wonderful gestures of generosity from throughout the town that support our students and educators and which have great meaning to the school experience for all children. It is for all of these expressions of kindness and support that I offer, on behalf of the North Reading Public Schools, my sincere thanks.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful summer filled with enjoyment and memorable experiences shared with all those who mean the most to you. We look forward to the new school year with great anticipation and excitement!

Jon C. Bernard, *Superintendent*

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## North Reading Middle School Open House and Community Celebration

The citizens of North Reading are cordially invited to attend an Open House and Community celebration commemorating the opening of the new North Reading Middle School. A formal ceremony and opportunities to tour the new middle school will take place beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30th. The ceremony will begin with a formal ceremony in the Performing Arts Center after which a ribbon will be cut to ceremonially commemorate the opening of North Reading Middle School. Students of the school district will perform their musical talents, speeches from local and state officials will be made, and citizens of North Reading will have the opportunity to tour the new school. On behalf of the entire school district, and as Superintendent of Schools, I extend my deep and sincere appreciation to the community of North Reading for their support of the beautiful new North Reading Middle/High School and for their overall support of public education. This is a proud occasion for all of North Reading.



### Author/Poet Lyn Hoopes Revisits the Batchelder School

By Ms. Kathy Conway, Reading Specialist

The Batchelder 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders recently participated in Poetry Workshops with Lyn Littlefield Hoopes. Lyn Hoopes has a Master of Arts degree in Children's Literature and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Children's Literature and Poetry. She is also the author of a number of picture books including: *The Unbeatable Bread*, *Wind A Ding*, and *Freefall*.

In the first session, Mrs Hoopes begins by sharing some of her poetry and encourages students to "listen for their writer's voice." Afterward, students work together to create a class poem. Lyn's goal is to stretch the students understanding of what goes into making a poem.

During the second session, students have an opportunity to create their own poems inspired by photographs Lyn has taken from nature, such as: reflections on water, spring flowers, snails, butterflies, robins, turtles, etc. Lyn guides students individually through the creative and editing processes and then provides an opportunity for students to share their thoughts and poems with others in the classroom.

Lyn has stated, ..."I ask myself, how can I bring this feeling of inspiration to children in the classroom and create an atmosphere of quiet and trust that will encourage them to listen to the world around them and their thoughts within."

This is Lyn Hoopes 4<sup>th</sup> year working with teachers and students at the Batchelder School. Big thanks go out to Kristin Kuperstein and the BPO for fully funding this worthwhile program.

Please continue reading to find samples of local students' poetry.



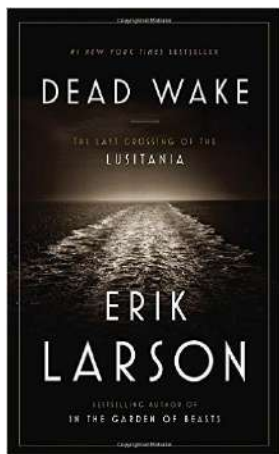
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Looking for School District Information?  
[www.north-reading.k12.ma.us](http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us)

## Book Recommendation: *Dead Wake* by Erik Larson

By Jon C. Bernard, Superintendent of Schools



In my last newsletter, I offered a book recommendation: *Destiny of the Republic* by Candice Millard. Several people corresponded with me and informed me that they had read the book and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Given that so many have enjoyed this book, I have decided to offer another book recommendation. The book is *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* by Erik Larson.

A summary offered on Amazon.com notes: “On May 1, 1915, with WWI entering its tenth month, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were surprisingly at ease, even though Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone. For months, German U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the *Lusitania* was one of the era’s great transatlantic “Greyhounds”—the fastest liner then in service—and her captain, William Thomas Turner, placed tremendous faith in the gentlemanly strictures of warfare that for a century had kept civilian ships safe from attack.

Germany, however, was determined to change the rules of the game, and Walther Schwieger, the captain of *Unterseeboot-20*, was happy to oblige. Meanwhile, an ultra-secret British intelligence unit tracked Schwieger’s U-boat, but told no one. As U-20 and the *Lusitania* made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small—hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more—all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history.

It is a story that many of us think we know but don’t, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era. Full of glamour and suspense, *Dead Wake* brings to life a cast of evocative characters, from famed Boston bookseller Charles Lauriat to pioneering female architect Theodate Pope to President Woodrow Wilson, a man lost to grief, dreading the widening war but also captivated by the prospect of new love.

Gripping and important, *Dead Wake* captures the sheer drama and emotional power of a disaster whose intimate details and true meaning have long been obscured by history.”

*Dead Wake* is Larson’s latest book and follows a host of other fabulously entertaining historical non-fiction books including *The Devil in the White City*, *Thunderstruck*, and *Isaac’s Storm*. I highly recommend *Dead Wake*—and all of Larson’s books—for a great summer read.

## School Bus Pass Application Procedures Announced

The North Reading Public Schools is now accepting bus pass applications for the 2015-2016 school year. On Tuesday, July 7<sup>th</sup> the North Reading Public Schools emailed its annual mailing with transportation and free and reduced lunch information to all students who will be entering grades 1 to 12 in the fall. Similar packets have been sent by mail to students entering kindergarten.



All students who wish to ride a school bus must acquire a bus pass. The full-year fee for students in grades kindergarten to 6 who live less than two miles from school and all students in grades 7 to 12 is \$300; the family maximum is \$500. We wish to make all Parents/Guardians aware that responding to this opportunity is time sensitive. ***Applications must be postmarked by August 17<sup>th</sup> in order to avoid a \$50 late fee; there will be no exceptions to this policy.***

Applications can also be picked up at each of the schools in the district; in the Business Office, which is located in the High School Media Center this summer; and can be found on the North Reading District website [www.north-reading.k12.ma.us](http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us) under the link for the Business Office.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Mazzola, Bus Pass Coordinator at (978) 360-1672.

## Author/Poet Lyn Hoopes Revisits the Batchelder School (continued)

### GOODNIGHT LITTLE HAWK

by Olivia Bakr (grade 3)

Your tired eyes  
gleaming like a full moon  
at midnight  
Your keen beak  
your gentle face  
your little Mohawk on your crown  
And a yawn as delicate as morning  
Dewdrops on newly  
grown grass  
Your awakened little eyes  
so happy  
As you call to  
your tired mother  
for a new batch of worms  
to drown  
your hunger from a long  
winter's rest  
Good morning little hawk



## "Beauty and the Beast" Performed by the Little School Theater Program By Mr. Christopher Tatro, Musical Director

The North Reading community has been treated to many outstanding performances this year at the North Reading High School Performing Arts Center. The Young Americans, "The Wizard of Oz," "Peter Pan," All-Town Chorus and Band, Sing Fling, and just a few weeks ago the Little School's production of "Beauty and the Beast," just to name a few. It is true that great spaces will bring great performances!

On June 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> the E. Ethel Little School Drama Club took to the stage for "Beauty and the Beast, Jr.," under the direction of Mr. Christopher Tatro and Mrs. Leslie Mazzone. The 42 member cast and crew had been rehearsing at the Little School since February and began rehearsing in the Performing Arts Center just ten days prior to their opening act.

## Author/Poet Lyn Hoopes Revisits the Batchelder School (continued)

### ROYAL TERNS AT DUSK by Nicole Steinmeyer (grade 5)

Royal Turns  
Are you brothers?  
Standing still  
As ocean water laps  
Your legs  
Wearing black caps  
And coats of grey  
Like a suit  
Keeping watch  
As others sleep  
Your reflection looks after you  
While you sleep  
You do not dare  
Move a muscle  
For you know  
Others are watching  
I wonder what it is like  
To obtain such responsibility  
The last of the sun's rays  
Shine upon you  
They glow  
Onto your feathered bodies  
Standing still  
Like an ocean

### HUMMINGBIRD LULLABY by Sophie Donovan (grade 3)

Beat your wings like a rushing river  
While your long beak hums  
with the sweet smell of nectar  
Hover in your peaceful moon sky  
rocking slowly in night air with blinking stars  
Sing your smooth song  
flitter, flutter, fly  
Oh hummingbird  
will you sing your lullaby?  
with your soft  
ermine fur and  
big, black, wide eyes  
please hum your lullaby



## **"Beauty and the Beast" Performed by the Little School Theater Program (Continued)**

The Little School Drama Club was established in 2007 by Mr. Tatro and is comprised of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The club has run a show every other year ever since its inception and continues to promote the performing arts at the Little School and in the North Reading School District. In the club's short history, over 250 alumni have performed in various musicals including: "Clowns," "Once Upon a Dream," "The Music Man," "Annie," and "Beauty and the Beast."

Mr. Tatro and Mrs. Mazzone continue to challenge the Drama Club students at the Little School to perform much beyond what is expected for their age. Amazingly, the students have responded with outstanding performances. Many hours are spent (all after school) rehearsing in small groups, reading groups, movement, blocking, vocal rehearsals, full cast, dance choreography, and technical rehearsals. In all, club members rehearsed 90 hours together for this production, not counting the many hours spent alone rehearsing, painting and building sets, etc. It truly is one huge undertaking.

The E. Ethel Little School Drama Club would like to extend a special thanks to members of both the Masquers Club and Hornet Productions for all their help in supporting this show. It is so nice to see older students donate their time to mentor younger students. It really is a win-win opportunity for all our students. The cast of "Beauty and the Beast" will forever be linked together and many will continue on to perform with Hornet Productions, Masquers, and some may even choose to perform in college and beyond. We thank you for sharing your talents and congratulations on a job well done!



# Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Update

By Mr. Michael Connelly, Director of Finance and Operations

On Monday, June 1<sup>st</sup> the town unanimously supported the FY 2016 School Department budget at the annual Town Meeting. The FY16 school department final budget amount is \$27,495,074. This represents a 2.7% increase over FY15. The FY16 budget is driven by many factors and challenges, which led to the need to make staffing and expense adjustments that have resulted in the \$731,059 increase over the FY15 appropriation. These factors can be summarized by the following: (1) Contractual obligations with employees and employee unions; (2) Staffing adjustments related to strategies detailed in NRPS 2016: Year 5; the district's strategic plan for continuous improvement; (3) Staffing to address an increasing enrollment at the high school; (4) New operational costs associated with the middle school/high school building project

The budget proposal attempts to achieve level services while moving forward with several key initiatives needed to implement a portion of Year 5 of the school district's strategic plan, "NRPS 2016: A Strategy for the Future." The three major strategy areas of NRPS 2016 are: **Technology Integration, Student Services, and Teaching and Learning**. The budget priorities directly connected to two of the three major strategy areas and which are supported by the work of the school administration on the continuous improvement plan include the hiring of district-wide digital learning specialists, a library/media specialist at the middle school, a special education teacher at the high school, and a district-wide speech and language pathologist.

In Year 5 of the strategic budget vision, the proposal as presented would result in an expenditure of \$226,904 representing an overall increase of approximately .80% to the FY16 budget. The modified level services budget addresses the increasing enrollment at the high school presently and for the 2015-2016 school year with a request for an additional 3.8 FTE (full-time equivalent) teaching positions beyond the NRPS 2016 requests to protect class sizes and course offerings. These positions are essential and seek to ensure that the high school will continue to be able to offer the same level of course offerings at improved class size/student-teacher ratios. The new positions included in the FY16 budget are as follows: 0.2 FTE Physical Education teacher, 0.2 FTE Health Education teacher, 0.6 FTE Business Education teacher, 1.0 FTE Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) teacher, 0.4 FTE Mathematics teacher, 0.4 FTE Foreign Language teacher, 1.0 FTE Guidance Counselor.

Enrollment at the high school level is anticipated to increase by a projected 32 or more students all within the next three years as large middle school classes move into the high school. Next year, it is anticipated the high school will have an additional 18 students. Two years ago, in 2013, the high school had 713 students; there are currently 795 students enrolled and the enrollment is expected to rise to as high as 830 students over the next three years. This increase has had a significant impact on class sizes and course offerings, which the staffing increases noted above in the FY16 budget proposal addresses. In addition to the instructional staffing increases, the FY16 budget proposal includes the addition of a 1.0 Guidance Counselor at the high school. Current caseloads of the guidance counselors are 15% higher than recommended levels by the American School Counselors Association. With the additional students at the high school next year and in future years, an additional Guidance Counselor is critical to help bring the high school student-counselor ratio within recommended levels.

There are other enrollment-based budget reductions to the FY16 budget request as well. Due to a projected decline in the number of middle school students, there will be a decrease in the number of staff at the middle school.

Additional costs will be required to operate the new middle school. Additional costs will be necessary to properly operate and maintain the new waste water treatment facility and support a projected increase in utility costs.

Copies of the budget documents are available on the school district's website at [http://ps.north-reading.k12.ma.us/pages/NRSDDistrict\\_Business/budget/index](http://ps.north-reading.k12.ma.us/pages/NRSDDistrict_Business/budget/index)

Many people have worked very hard at discussing student needs, thinking creatively, and making decisions that are sometimes difficult but strive to ultimately preserve the high quality of education in the North Reading Public Schools. We appreciate the communities continued support of public education for the children of our community.

## Upcoming Important Dates and Events

School Committee Meeting; PARCC Presentation  
School Committee Meeting  
First Day of School (Grades 1-12)  
Pre-K and Kindergarten Orientation  
First Day of School (Pre-K and Kindergarten)  
Community Open House and  
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (6:30 p.m.)

July 27, 2015  
August 24, 2015  
September 9, 2015  
September 9 & 10, 2015  
September 11, 2015  
  
September 30, 2015



### North Reading (Again) Seeks to Partner with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)

In February of this year, the North Reading Public Schools sought the assistance of the Massachusetts School Building Authority to support the cost of restoring the roof at the E. Ethel Little Schools. The first step in the process was the filing of a Statement of Interest (SOI) for the project. This was done in partnership with municipal officials. In early June, I positive news was received in that North Reading has been invited into the next phase of the program sponsored by the MSBA. There is still much work to be done to complete the process, but if successful, the town of North Reading stands to receive slightly more than 46% in state reimbursement funds which would help to significantly offset the cost of the roof restoration project at the Little School for the community of North Reading.

At this time, it is anticipated that school and municipal officials will meet the requirements of the MSBA as it relates to this project. The community will be kept apprised of the progress of this proposed project by way of local media.