



# EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

East Hampton, Connecticut

## Superintendent's Update

Week of January 15, 2018



The vision of the East Hampton Public Schools: Preparing and inspiring our students to be innovative, responsible, contributing members of an ever-changing global society.


The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience,  
but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

### This week in our Schools

This is an important meeting for  
parents, teachers,  
and staff members.  
Given the uncertainty in municipal  
funding in the State of  
Connecticut Budget,  
your knowledge of the East  
Hampton Budget is crucial!

**Tuesday, January 16**  
**East Hampton High School, 6:30 PM**



**Board of Education Meeting**  
**2018-19 Budget Presentation by Superintendent**  
**Visit by Representative Melissa Ziobron**  
**to answer questions about**  
**State of CT Budget and Municipal Funding**

Parents, teachers, and staff members are urged to attend  
the Board of Education Meeting on Tuesday, January 16 at 6:30 PM at the High School.

Parents are urged to attend  
the Superintendent's Advisory Council on Thursday, January 18 at 9:00 AM at 94 Main Street.

Teachers and staff members are urged to attend  
the optional Faculty Meetings on Wednesday, January 24 at 2:45 & 3:45 at the High School.

- **Monday, January 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.** No school.
- **Tuesday, January 16 – High School Midyear Exams.**
- **Tuesday, January 16 – Board of Education Meeting in the East Hampton High School T-Bell, 6:30 PM.** This meeting is the first presentation of the 2018-19 School Budget by the Superintendent of Schools. In addition, **Representative Melissa Ziobron will be in attendance** to answer questions on municipal funding. **The meeting will be livestreamed and CHILDCARE is available!**
- **Wednesday, January 17 – High School Midyear Exams.**
- **Wednesday, January 17 – Middle School Band & Chorus Concert in the High School Auditorium, 6:30 PM.** Come and hear our middle school musicians! (Snow state: Thursday, January 18)
- **Thursday, January 18 – High School Midyear Exams.**












**Thursday, January 18 – Superintendent's Advisory Council at 94 Main Street, 9:00 AM.** All parents and community members are welcome to attend any and all of these monthly meetings. This meeting will feature information on the 2018-19 School Budget. Please come and ask questions about the budget and come for the coffee!



## January/February 2018 Calendar

**Get your event on this calendar!**

Send additional events and dates to  
[psmith@easthamptonct.org](mailto:psmith@easthamptonct.org).

14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	<b>No School</b> <b>Martin Luther King Day</b> 	<b>High School Exams</b> BOE Policy Subcommittee 5:30 PM – High School <hr/> <b>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS</b> T-Bell, 6:30 PM <b>2018-19 BUDGET PRESENTATION</b>	<b>High School Exams</b>   <b>Middle School Concert</b> <b>High School Auditorium</b> <b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>High School Exams</b>   <b>Superintendent's Advisory Council</b> 94 Main St. 9:00-10:15 AM <b>Budget Information on Agenda</b> Middle School Concert Snow Date		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
			<b>Optional Faculty Metings:</b> <b>Budget Information</b> 2018-19 High School T-Bell <b>2:45 PM</b> <b>3:45 PM</b> <b>East Hampton Sports Boosters Meeting</b> <b>High School Cafeteria</b> <b>7:00 PM</b>		Christa McAuliffe Recognition Day  <b>Coffee &amp; Chat With the Superintendent</b> 94 Main St. 7:30-9:00 AM <b>BELLRINGER DAY</b> <b>Dedication of the John Fidler Way at EHHS, 9:30 AM</b> Grade 5 visit to the <u>Middle School</u>	
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
	<b>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS</b> T-Bell, 6:30 PM <b>BUDGET DISCUSSION</b>		<b>Grade 8 High School Parent Planning Night</b> <b>High School</b> <b>6:30 PM</b>		 <b>GROUNDHOG DAY</b> Middle School Dance Grades 7 & 8 7:00 PM	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	<b>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS</b> T-Bell, 6:30 PM <b>BUDGET DISCUSSION</b>		Middle School to Wolf Pack game <b>Elementary PTO Center School</b> <b>6:00 PM</b> <b>Middle School PTO Middle School Library 6:00 PM</b> <b>Project Graduation High School Library</b> <b>6:00 PM</b>		 <b>PTO Brain Show Memorial School Cafeteria</b>	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			<b>VALENTINE'S DAY</b> 	 <b>Superintendent's Advisory Council</b> 94 Main St. 9:00-10:15 AM <b>BOOK DISCUSSION!</b>	 <b>Coffee &amp; Chat With the Superintendent</b> 94 Main St. 7:30-9:00 AM <b>BOOK DISCUSSION!</b>	

## Notes



### **Budget meetings & workshops – get involved!**

Wednesday, January 24	Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2018-19 reviewed with <b>Faculty and Staff Members</b> Optional faculty meetings at East Hampton High School T-Bell @ 2:45 PM and 3:45 PM
Monday, January 29	Board of Education <b>Budget Workshop</b> conducted by the Board of Education 6:30 PM at East Hampton High School (Public Invited)
Monday, February 5	Board of Education <b>Budget Workshop</b> conducted by the Board of Education 6:30 PM at East Hampton High School (Public Invited)
Monday, February 26	Board of Education <b>Budget Approval</b> (must be submitted to Town Hall by March 1) at the Board of Education Meeting 6:30 PM at East Hampton High School (Public Invited)
Monday, March 12	Review of Town Budget & Board of Education Budget conducted by the <b>Board of Finance</b> 6:00 PM – Middle School Library (Public Invited)
Friday, March 16	Review of Board of Education Budget conducted by the <b>Board of Finance</b> 4:00 PM – Town Library Community Room (Public Invited)



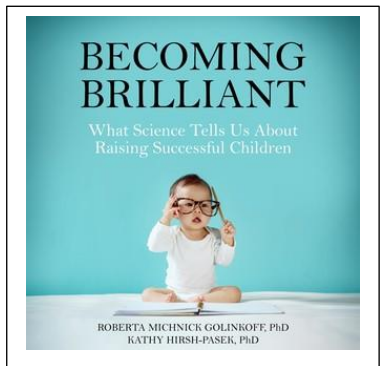
### **We are proud to dedicate "The John Fidler Way"**

On Friday, January 26 at East Hampton High School at 9:30 AM, the school community will celebrate **Bellringer Day in honor of John Fidler**, former Principal of East Hampton High School. **This day will be the official dedication of The John Fidler Way at East Hampton High School.** The event is being held during the school day to include the student population – the most important group of people to John. There are street signs that will be officially unveiled at the entrance and exit of the school and a plaque inside the school will be dedicated, as well. The event is open to the public and includes a brief ceremony in the High School Auditorium and outdoor activities by the street signs, so please dress for the weather!

### **Two chances to discuss the book, "Becoming Brilliant"**

Please join Superintendent of Schools, Paul K. Smith, for a book discussion on *Becoming Brilliant*. **There are two chances to participate in the discussion.**

1. **Thursday, February 15 at the Superintendent's Advisory Council (94 Main Street) from 9:00-10:15 AM.**
2. **Friday, February 16 at the Friday morning "Coffee and Chat" (94 Main Street) from 7:30-9:30 AM.**



Get the book, ***Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us About Raising Successful Children***. It's a great read! **And, once read, you'll see the role that parents play in helping to educate their own children.**

Even if you don't read all of the book – or any of it – the discussion will still be great. By participating, you'll understand our important work to develop an **East Hampton Profile of the Graduate** with milestones in each building. Our goal is to move toward a broader vision of success supporting the acquisition of cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills for all students.

**[Click to order from Amazon on Kindle or paperback.](#)**

(If you prefer not to buy your own copy of the book, but still want to participate contact [psmith@easthamptonct.org](mailto:psmith@easthamptonct.org) for a copy! – We want you to be part of this.)

## Thoughts

### Empathy is a learning foundation according to research

It's easy to agree that empathy is something that we want our students to understand. Our entire **Making Kindness and Caring Common** initiative promotes empathy in our students. Our new **Profile of the Graduate** addresses empathy as an integral component of responsibility and compassion. As a stand-alone skill, empathy is not only key for our students' future, but in fact, is often a missing piece in our society.

New research places empathy in an even more important role. **Empathy is foundational to learning according to many researchers in education.** In order for students to master 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, they must have a solid foundation of empathy in order to master skills of collaboration, communication, and networking.

The two articles included below give a much broader definition of empathy as well.

*"Empathy has suddenly morphed beyond a narrow definition as a tolerant attitude into a deep interpersonal skill necessary for effective teaming, customer design, and other aspects of life that require openness to the flow of information."*

If one looks at the current, connected world like the author below, there is evidence that *"the social environment interacts with human consciousness to create a social field of information."* The author feels that the strength of our students' connection to the field is based on *"empathy and openness."*

The implications for education: *"It's time to act on the assumption that knowledge is flowing through students, not being delivered to them, and that the chief skill is openness. That means, for the foreseeable future, empathy is learning."*

This certainly implies an approach to education in which knowledge and school experiences are fluid and personalized for groups of students and meaningful as a collaborative *"collective"* experience.

What experiences do students have in our classrooms that currently meet these expectations?

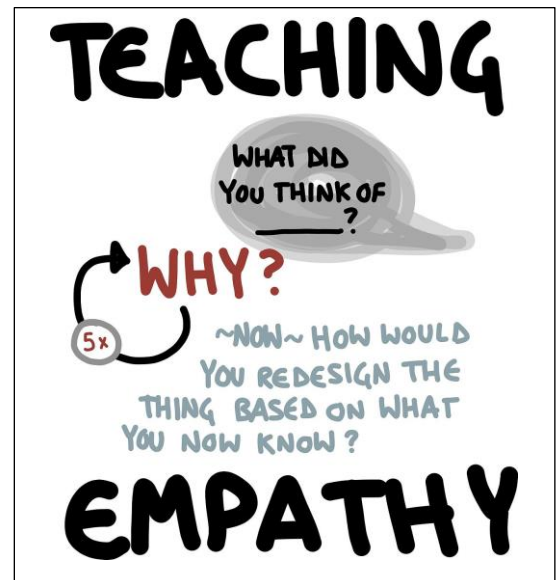
### In Our Connected World, What If Empathy Is Learning? by Thomas Markham in MindShift

Observing a group of students conversing deeply as a team, checking resources on a Chromebook, presenting solutions to a problem in a project, or responding to open ended questions, you might ask yourself: What the heck is going on? Is this learning?

In times past, this was an easy question to answer. Traditional, recognizable elements of education, such as lectures, worksheets, spelling tests, writing, and standardized tests were prominent. There was also a shared mental model of what learning *meant*. It was assumed that individuals operate as a unit separate from each other and the environment, which enabled the transmission version of learning—the input-output model in which packets of information enter the brain, form building blocks of knowledge, rewire circuits, stimulate executive function, and thinking happens... (The conversation trails off a bit at this point because the whole process gets mysterious, especially the thinking part.)

But what now? Information is everywhere, making it impossible to package. Collaboration and networking underpin life, and constant communication is the norm, even for plants. Each time you check your smart phone you tap into a global brain. And when you finally put down the phone, you shake your head: *So much going on.* In fact, the tightening weave in the global network means that never has there been an era in human history in which so many people *learn* together.

Education has noticed, driving the move to personalized, learner-centered, teacher facilitated, applied skills approaches to schooling, with increased emphasis on teamwork and collaborative project-based work in school, accompanied by a sharp necessity to tap deep student attributes such as engagement, motivation, openness, and curiosity.



That the transmission model has collapsed is clear. But it's now time to take the more difficult step: To acknowledge that living a densely linked life and operating in a non-linear, intimately connected, globally diverse, culturally conflicted world with 16 million text messages exchanged every minute and knowledge itself becoming a social construct mediated by the whole requires entirely new thinking about learning itself.

What will replace the old model? There are three important clues—three sets of data from emerging science—that point us in the direction of a radically new notion of learning in the remainder of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

First, consider that conventional evolutionary theory is being challenged by complexity, which assumes the primary unit of evolution is the organic whole, not the individual. This theory follows the rule of dynamic systems, in which chaotic patterns (and we have plenty now) accelerate until crisis reaches a penultimate stage and chaos resolves itself into a new order. In other words, the entire 'building block' notion of life, with a long evolutionary timeline and subtle changes in individual genes over many lifetimes, may be replaced by the notion of collective intelligence and evolution of the whole.

Second, there is increasing evidence that in our highly connected world the social environment interacts with human consciousness to create a social field of information. Like fish trying to see water, the field is invisible to us, but we *learn* from the field. It's now our chief source of curriculum.

Third, experts in the field of social neuroscience assert that our relationship to the field can be mediated through an expression of empathy and openness. That may be why empathy has suddenly morphed beyond a narrow definition as a tolerant attitude into a deep interpersonal skill necessary for effective teaming, customer design, and other aspects of life that require openness to the flow of information.

What does this mean for education? In my view, it's time to match the emerging science with the tempo of the times and upend established 'truths' around learning. It's time to act on the assumption that knowledge is flowing through students, not being delivered to them, and that the chief skill is openness. That means, for the foreseeable future, empathy is learning. This is the game-changer. Anything less is a slow dance solution in a rock and roll world.

This may seem theoretical and far away from present school practices. But recall the complexity approach to evolution: More chaos indicates the problem is intensifying to the point of a sudden shift. We are not as far from a 21<sup>st</sup> century model of learning as we might believe. In fact, there are at least six ways that schools can get out in front of the shift:

### **Promote a Holistic, Non-Brain Centric View of Learning**

Empathy be a behavior, but it has a physiological underpinning. In an empathetic state, the body relaxes and brain activity shifts to the higher centers. To an extent larger than generally realized, this shift is mediated by the heart. Further, the physiology of the heart—in the form of heart rate variability, which affects the messaging to the brain—is influenced by emotions. All the emotions associated with empathy, such as openness, humility, gratitude, and compassion, affect the heart positively.

### **View Empathy as the Foundation**

Old schemata for learning, such as Bloom's Taxonomy, need to be replaced by iceberg models that give us better insight into behaviors that matter in the world, including social awareness, self-awareness, and attitudes that lead to connection with others. This includes replacing the term 'social-emotional' learning, an industrial hangover from a time in which academic and social skills could be distinguished, with a strengths-based focus that binds intellect, passion, and skillfulness into a whole. Teaching SEL skills is on the rise, but teaching the core strength—openness, curiosity, and empathy—and acknowledging empathy's fundamental role in cognition and achievement is the next step.

### **Turn Empathy into an Outcome**

Empathy can be learned, demonstrated, and evaluated, but it needs to be defined in terms deeper than 'I like others.' Empathy is the first step in the design process. Empathetic behavior makes teams function better and can be identified in teamwork rubrics as active listening, open body posture, kind critique, and similar behaviors that can be assessed. Learning to be empathetic, however, does require the right conditions — sitting in a row of desks and answering teacher questions doesn't do it. Empathy is best learned through service or teams in a project-based environment.

### **Continue to Personalize Learning**

The exact definition of personalized learning is a work in progress, but is a visible response to our intuition that the old model of learning no longer holds. The more that an individual is not confined to chapters in a text book or a set of lecture



notes, and has 24/7 access to a broader field of knowledge, the more that learning becomes personal as well as collectivized. Many choices equal many paths equal multiple ways to become educated. This is a huge challenge for formal education, but unavoidable.

### Recognize Teachers as Co-creators

With the learner at the center, the teacher is the facilitator. But education requires a serious build-out of this concept. In the new model, the real teacher is not a single person, but the social field, which leads to learning, but also awakens deeper levels of creativity and a desire for service. In the transmission model, learning is very much geared toward self-fulfillment; in the new model, we can expect empathy to shift the focus to the common good. Teachers will inevitably begin to apply their subject expertise to real-world demands for solutions, innovation, and problem solving. That's really the outgrowth of an empathic model of learning: To make a positive difference in the world.

### Get Students Out of the Classroom and into the World

In a world of collective 'learning', the standards-based approach will inevitably fail or undergo severe modification to focus on skillfulness rather than content. The replacement is 'learning while doing', hopefully in service to the greater good. Expect to see service learning, out of school social good projects, and opportunities for students to share their collaborative knowledge to explode over the next few years.

## Why Empathy Holds the Key to Transforming 21st Century Learning by Thomas Markham in MindShift

Like other aspects of modern life, education can make the head hurt. So many outcomes, so much important work to do, so many solutions and strategies, so many variations on teaching, so many different kinds of students with so many different needs, so many unknowns in preparing for 21<sup>st</sup> Century life and the endless list of jobs that haven't been invented.

What if we discovered one unifying factor that brought all of this confusion under one roof and gave us a coherent sense of how to stimulate the intellect, teach children to engage in collaborative problem solving and creative challenge, and foster social-emotional balance and stability—one factor that, if we got right, would change the equation for learning in the same way that confirming the existence of a fundamental particle informs a grand theory of the universe?

That factor exists: **It's called empathy.**

To make that argument requires a deep dive into the profound nature of empathy. Right now, empathy roughly equates to "I like you and am willing to tolerate you regardless of differences because I am a good person." But the textbook definition hints at something more profound: It's 'the feeling of being able to understand and share another person's experiences and emotions.' That all-encompassing definition means empathy results from a complex mix of other meaningful emotions and attitudes that fuel human personality, such as openness, curiosity, self-restraint, vulnerability, sensitivity, awareness, respect, appreciation, and even love. Add this list to the fact that empathy can't manifest unless we have had our *own* experiences and emotions to contrast, compare, and connect with others—and we can see that empathy is more than a simple connector; it's the subterranean, fundamental glue that holds humanity together.

Thus, it shouldn't surprise us that such a potent emotion resonates across mind and body, influencing behavior and brain function. That is exactly the case. Empathy has the potential to open up students to deeper learning, drive clarity of thinking, and inspire engagement with the world—in other words, provide the emotional sustenance for outstanding human performance.

I see this regularly in my work with project-based-learning teachers who create classrooms that hum with good vibes and focused work. But to understand the full potential of empathy, let's connect some dots. Those dots may appear unrelated at the moment, but they constitute a scatterplot with a trend line, predicting that empathy will eventually not be an add-on or 'soft' skill or one component of a middle school advisory program, and in the process confirm that a school system focused on cognition and testing alone cannot bring forth the greater purpose, focus, collaboration, and creativity necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century students.

I see seven 'dots', if you will, that begin to paint this emerging picture of schooling in the future:

## **Empathy underlies collaboration**

As social-emotional learning becomes more necessary to help students navigate life and work, empathy is getting more popular by the day, for good reason: Empathy lies at the heart of 21<sup>st</sup> century skillfulness in teamwork, collaboration and communication in a diverse world. Speaking or listening to someone without radiating empathy narrows the channel of communication or blocks connection altogether. Particularly in the new reality of a global world, without empathy you're not ready to engage the 21<sup>st</sup> century, either in the workplace or across cultures. It has to be taught, practiced and coached.

## **Empathy is healthy**

In the last twenty years, discussions about emotions have taken a radical turn. For years, negative emotions dominated theory and research. Today we know that positive emotions enhance well-being, health, relationships and personal strengths. At the top of this pyramid are the emotions associated with empathy: curiosity, openness, appreciation and gratitude. Empathy simply powers up the mind, body and spirit.

## **Empathy promotes whole-child learning**

A critical dot, overlooked in our brain-centric world, is that empathy may activate the heart. As I've written many times, the heart has a role in learning equal to the brain. In fact, science does not support the mistaken notion that the brain does all the work. Research on heart rate variability and emotions shows that the heart engages the brain in constant conversation, using the language of emotions to direct the 'state' of the brain. To perform its role, the heart contains upwards of 40,000 neurons identical to nerve cells in the brain; eighty percent of nerve traffic then travels upward from heart to brain, making it clear that the heart influences brain function. While we don't fully understand the implications of this partnership, two findings have been confirmed: Anxiety and negative feelings alter the coding of the messages sent by the heart to the brain, resulting in stress or fight or flight responses; at the same time, positive emotions such as gratitude and appreciation—close cousins of empathy—show pronounced, positive effects on brain processes.

## **Empathy 'opens' us up**

The frontal lobes of the brain, at least as much as we know now, are the seat of planning, execution, problem solving and creativity—and when the frontal lobes are working well, so are we. In that well-documented 'flow state,' humans function at their peak, moving into a whole-body feeling of openness, relaxed focus, and creative possibility. If we know empathy activates the frontal lobes, why can't we imagine intentional lessons about empathy and openness designed to put students in an optimal state for learning?

## **Empathy powers up inquiry and project based learning**

Instruction is clearly headed in the direction of student-centered approaches such as inquiry and PBL. These approaches succeed in an atmosphere of care and positive relationships, both between student and teacher, and student and student. Classrooms that lack this foundation cannot succeed at project based work or open-ended questioning that relies on students' ability to care about their learning. Setting up a culture of care is very much an exercise in making empathy central to daily work.

## **Empathy triggers creativity**

Beyond rounding out the skills of collaboration and communication, empathy, design and collaboration are interconnected pieces of the creative puzzle. Empathy is now identified as the first step in the design process, whether crafting new software for a user or creating form-factors that inherently please the consumer. Right now, empathy is described as 'step.' But that easy designation belies a very deep process in which a designer must, for lack of a better term, 'sink into the mind of another and take on their persona'. That is a deep descriptor of an ultimate form of empathy—and it may be a necessary component of an educational system increasingly tilted toward design and inquiry.

## **Empathy unites**

The list could have started here, but on a planet that is now close to completing the globalizing process, empathy assumes a special role as the key emotion critical for seven-plus billion people to live in harmony and cooperative relationship. For our Stone-Age brethren, fear and separation were appropriate mechanisms for survival. But that has been flipped by sheer numbers, technology, resource scarcity, and environmental impact. Empathy is required curriculum, and without it, eventually our current focus on high test scores and fulfilling college requirements will be rendered meaningless by untoward events.

The takeaway? Ready or not, education is entering an age in which social learning is the new norm. Pure academics are giving way to increased opportunities for students to work together; teachers increasingly take on the role of co-learner and facilitator; listening, learning, and teaming are the new core skills. At the heart of this new skillfulness for everyone is the ability to forge deep connections lead to creative problem solving and positive pursuits. Taken all together, this makes empathy critical to schools. In fact, very soon we will need to invent a new taxonomy of learning that makes empathy the base of the learning pyramid.

*Thom Markham, founder and CEO of PBL Global, is an author, psychologist and international school consultant who has assisted over 300 schools and 6000 teachers across five continents in implementing project-based learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies, social-emotional growth and successful inquiry-based systems of teaching and learning.*



Paul K. Smith



26 Miles of Hope