

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

January 2023



Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

This past week we turned our calendars to the year 2023. As you and your families closed the chapter on the year 2022, I hope you looked back on the year with fond memories. Transitioning to a new year is exciting because it's our opportunity to look into the future and imagine the possibilities. Thomas Jefferson said, "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." While I love history, I find that looking forward is much more exciting than reflecting on the past. So, what do you have to look forward to in 2023?

New in this edition of the Superintendent Sentinel is a podcast! The podcast is titled: *Conversations from the Hart: A Podcast with Superintendent Jonathan Hart* and is designed to provide parents, staff, students, and residents with topics, events, and important information about our wonderful Readington Schools. In this first podcast I sat down with Dr. Stacey Brown, Supervisor of Humanities and Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science, and Technology to discuss academic achievement. Stay tuned - more will come this school year!



Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897
Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

In photo above: Dr. Hart, Ms. Ellen Goodfellow/RMS-Educational Professional of the Year, Mr. Timothy Charleston/RMS-Principal.

Conversations from the Hart: A Podcast with Superintendent Jonathan Hart



Please [click here](#) to enjoy the first podcast with guests Dr. Stacey Brown and Ms. Sarah Pauch.

Superintendent Budget and Bagels – January 26, 2023

Please join Dr. Hart and Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator, on Thursday, January 26, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the BOE Conference Room. The topic of conversation will be the **2023-2024 Budget Preparations**. Refreshments sponsored by the Readington HSA.



Please RSVP to: rsvp@readington.k12.nj.us.

"Podcasts aren't only good entertainment but also great education." – Unknown

Curriculum Corner

Start Strong

Dr. Stacey Brown, Supervisor of Humanities
Ms. Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science & Technology,



The Start Strong assessments were designed to inform instruction by providing educators—as well as parents—with an early indication of the level of support students may need as they enter a new school year.

The Start Strong assessments were given in the fall and assessed students on a subset of priority standards from the prior school year. For instance, a fifth-grade Start Strong mathematics test focused on fourth-grade New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The assessments were administered quickly, in person, and provided immediate results to the teachers. The test

design, which allowed for shortened testing time and immediate results, means that Start Strong results must be interpreted and used differently than NJSLA results.

Start Strong assessments provided a data point to support district-level curriculum planning and guidance for revisiting prerequisite concepts and skills. These tests were created to help educators and families better understand, at the beginning of the school year, what educational support students may need to succeed in the current school year.

Governor's Educator of the Year Program Honorees – 2022-2023 School Year



We are pleased to announce the Readington Township District 2022-2023 Governor's Educator of the Year (GEOY) Program recipients. Each of our schools have recognized a Teacher and Educational Services Professional for this prestigious honor.

Readington Middle School: Betsy Freeman/G&T Teacher – Ellen Goodfellow/School Counselor

Holland Brook School: Gargi Adhikari/Special Education Teacher – Helena Coelho/Paraprofessional

Three Bridges School: Jenna Nagel/Grade 2 Teacher – Zelia Lopes-Shreiber/Behaviorist

Whitehouse School: Janice Razza/Grade 3 Teacher – Anna Albano/Paraprofessional

In photo below: Dr. Hart, Ms. Gargi Adhikari/HBS-Teacher of the Year, and Mr. Paul Nigro/HBS-Principal.



See additional GEOY photos on last page.

Parent Academy Night – Save the Date!

We are planning a night of discovery for our parents on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. Please mark your calendars!

Tech Department

Technology: Devices in District and New Initiatives

Mr. James Belske, District Technology Coordinator
jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us or 908-386-2502



Our students continue to excel and utilize our districts 1 to 1 Chromebook deployment for all students in grades 1-8. Chromebooks have become very familiar and easy-to-use resources for our young learners. iPads are also available to our kindergarten students for additional ease of use and application support.

To provide connectivity to all of our student devices, our district maintains wireless access points in most areas of each school building. Over the past summer we implemented upgrades to our Internet bandwidth and connectivity between remote schools to enhance accessibility and improved performance. Dependable Internet connectivity is a critical priority for our district. Maintaining reliable and fast online access for wide ranging curriculum software use is very important for our student learning needs.

Internet hosted software accounts for the vast majority of curriculum resources we provide for our students and teachers. Our district continuously evaluates current and new software subscriptions that can benefit students' learning needs. New and updated features within hosted software provide significant benefits to meet the evolving educational needs of students.

- For general technology tips and support resources, please visit our [Tech@Home](#) portal.
- For technical support please email techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us

Please reach out to me directly at any time with any technology feedback, questions or concerns: jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us.

Parenting in the Screen Age

Please [click here](#) to preview the newest book from Dr. Delaney Ruston, MD., the maker of the acclaimed Screenagers Movie. The book is a guide to help parents have calm conversations with their children about technology. The book includes a lot of tips and advice on how to help children manage the world of technology and the impact of it on their emotional well-being.



“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.” – Bill Gates

Budgeting Time of Year

Mr. Jason M. Bohm, Business Administrator

jbohm@readington.k12.nj.us



The Board of Education is tasked with managing the budget of the district with the guidance of our Superintendent, Dr. Jonathan Hart, and district administration. As with every year, the first few months of the new year is when budgeting, planning and preparing occurs. The creation and implementation of a strong, responsible budget allows the district to maintain the many programs our students have become accustomed to. The district is also able to maintain the buildings and grounds in the manner in which our constituents have come to expect.

The 2022-2023 budget, which is currently being utilized, has helped the district to meet the goals that are set annually, and included some of the following highlights:

- Additional grade-level teachers at WHS due to increased enrollment from new housing developments, as well as expansion of teaching staff for physical education and music;
- Reallocation of staff to create a new teacher position for a preschool disabilities program;
- Increased wages for substitute staff, and security resource officers through a shared services relationship with the Township of Readington Police Department;
- Continuation of afterschool student intervention services for learning loss due to the pandemic, along with mental health services for staff and students through federal funding;
- Capital project upgrades outside the tax levy such as replacement of the final roofing section at Holland Brook School, cupola repair at Three Bridges School, outdoor classroom enhancements at all school buildings, audit/video system upgrades at the stage at Holland Brook School and board meeting room, among others.

The Board of Education shall hold open public sessions and budget topics for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year, tentatively set as follows:

February 7, 2023: Curriculum/Staff Development, Pupil Services and Technology

February 21, 2023: Facilities, Transportation, Administration, Personnel and Benefits

March 14, 2023: Presentation on the whole budget to the public with tentative approval

April 4, 2023: Budget clarification

April 25, 2023: Budget hearing and final adoption of budget

During the planning of the 2023-2024 school year budget, there will be some challenges facing our district which include, as of the writing of this article, staff and program modifications due to an increased enrollment from new housing developments, facility upgrades to ensure both students and staff remain safe and healthy, along with increases in staff salaries, inflation and health insurance premiums. In addition to these challenges, the district continues to be committed to providing our students with a comprehensive and rigorous program of studies, with a full complement of athletic and extra-curricular offerings.

All input and concerns about the budget can be heard during the February 7 and February 21 board meetings as well as the other dates listed above. Public input helps the Board of Education to create a fiscally responsible budget while keeping all of the members of the community apprised of the current needs of the district. Please consider attending one or all of the dates. As always, should you have questions, please contact Mr. Bohm.

Building Spotlight: Three Bridges School

Three Bridges School is Alive with the Sound of Music

Dr. Kristen Higgins, Principal



Three Bridges School has welcomed a new music teacher to our arts education program. As a school community we have embraced the benefits that a strong music education program can have for our young students.

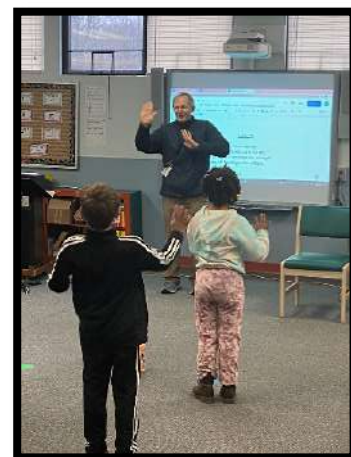
Mr. Craig Tipton has joined our staff with a great depth of experience and education, including a Master's Degree from the renowned Westminster Choir College. He has extensive training in the use of the Kodaly Concept, a philosophy that states "we should first learn to love music as human sound and as an experience that enriches life," and the Orff Schulwerk approach to building musicianship in every learner, by integrating music, movement, speech, and drama into lessons. He has taught many years at the collegiate, high school, middle school, and elementary levels. He has also performed professionally in operas and musicals in America and Europe. Notably, he spent two summers in Italy performing at the Festival Del Due in Spoleto.

The music program is a balance of activities where students play instruments, sing songs, learn rhythms, learn solfege (do re mi fa so la ti do), and develop their vocal techniques, in which the concepts of posture, vowel formation, and proper vocal warm-up are taught and practiced. The students are learning a variety of songs from current pop music and theater. For example, third graders are working on "Rise" by Katy Perry and "A Million Dreams" from the show *The Greatest Showman*, second graders are preparing "Castle on a Cloud" from *Les Miserables*, and "How Far I'll Go" by Moana. The students are also singing songs from other cultures. Willie Nelson is quoted saying, "We are the same. There is no difference anywhere in the world. People are people. They laugh, cry, feel, and love, and music seems to be the common denomination that brings us all together. Music cuts through all boundaries and goes right to the soul." The music program at TBS is certain to celebrate many cultures in various fashions.

TBS is also very excited for our first third grade play that has been prepared and practiced as an afterschool club with Mr. Tipton and third grade teacher, Ms. Christine Lewis. Please be on the lookout for our advertised performance in February.

In Photo: Mr. Tipton, Lily Reeves and Garrett Thompson

Please [click here](#) for a sneak peek at one of the songs being performed by the whole cast during rehearsal.



"The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic...music, dance, painting, and theater are all keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment." – William Bennet, Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Special Education Spotlight

Talking to Your Child About Disabilities

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services



Your child probably has a classmate with a disability, a sibling with ADHD or a grandma that needs a cane to walk. Children are naturally observant and curious. They are always taking in new information and learning about the world around them. It's often easier for children to notice differences in others which may prompt questions. As parents we may be hesitant to talk about differences because we don't want to draw attention to them. However, by not talking about them and not allowing children to ask questions, this may send the message that differences are wrong or it is rude to discuss. How can a parent best address talking about disabilities with your child?

1. Use Matter of Fact Language - Be honest and direct. For example, if a child asks "Why can't she talk?" You can say, "It's ok she can't talk, she uses an i-pad to communicate." It's important to keep emotions out of your conversation. If you say someone's disability is sad or awful, your child may pity the person and that won't be helpful. Consider not using the word normal to describe a nondisabled child; as normal implies abnormality or a defect in others.

2. Teach Kindness and Sensitivity: Be a good role model - Don't allow jokes or bullying. Children with special needs are more likely to be bullied and teased in every way because they're just easier targets. If you hear your child or your child's friends referring to another child or adult as dumb or retarded, explain how much those words hurt. Teach your child to apologize when he/she has hurt another child's feelings. Parents are the best role models for their children. Model acceptance and inclusion.

3. Point out Similarities; Not Differences - If your child talks about a classmate that uses an i-pad to communicate or a classmate that is in a wheelchair, point out the sameness between the children and emphasize their similarities to help kids relate to each other. If you focus solely on differences, this may send the message that people with disabilities are different. Just as children can see visible differences, they can also point out traits they share. The children may share the same age or go to the same school or like the same activities. Parents can make it clear that a disability is a normal part of our diverse world by talking about it in a matter of fact way. A disability should not be something that is frightening or sad.

4. Learn about Disabilities Together - You may not have all the answers. Use your child's questions as opportunities to learn more about disabilities together. It's ok to say to your child, "I'm not sure or I don't know much about muscular dystrophy, let's learn about it together."

There are so many wonderful picture books and story books written to help teach your child about disabilities, acceptance and diversity. The Readington Child Study Team may also be able to provide parents with guidance and resources for talking to children about different disabilities. Here are a few books that come highly recommended.

- *Little Senses Series: It was Supposed to Be Sunny and This Beach is Loud* by Samantha Cotterill: These stories are written by an author with autism. Children can relate to having to cope at noisy places, manage schedule changes, try new foods, or figure out another's feelings.

- *Can Bears Ski by Raymon Antrobus*: Children learn about hearing disabilities through the eyes of Little Bear.
 - *I Talk Like a River by Jordan Scott*: This story is about a little boy who stutters and his father helps him find his voice.
 - *Thank you, Mr. Falker by Patricia Palacco*: This story is about a little girl who is a gifted artist but when she reads the words become jumbled until a special teacher helps her understand her reading disability.
 - *We Move Together by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire*: The story follows a mixed-ability group of kids and the different ways they navigate through spaces. The children creatively negotiate everyday barriers and find joy and connection in disability culture and community.
 - *My Three Best Friends and Me, Zulay by Carli Best*: Zulay is a blind first grade student that reads braille and uses a cane. Zulay is determined to run a race on Field Day.
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Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- January 16 / Schools Closed – Martin Luther King Day
- January 26 / Superintendent Budget and Bagels
- February 2 / SEPAG Meeting
- February 20 / Schools Closed – Presidents Day
- February 23-24 Kindergarten Registration



Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- January 17, February 7, and February 21, 2023

Additional Governor's Educator of the Year Recipient Photos:



Whitehouse School

Ms. Albano
Dr. Hart
Ms. Razza



Three Bridges School

Dr. Higgins
Ms. Nagel
Ms. Lopes-Shreiber
Dr. Hart



Readington Middle School

Mr. Charleston
Ms. Freeman
Dr. Moss
Dr. Hart



Holland Brook School

Ms. Adhikari
Ms. Coelho

"Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself." – John Dewey