

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

March 2022



Message from the Superintendent

As I sit to write this, the weather is currently 62 degrees and sunny. It's days like today that remind me of the rejuvenation of the spring season. Soon the trees will turn green, flowers will bloom, and the sounds of students playing outside will ring through the open windows of our schools. Spring has always been a time when I looked forward. This year, I am looking forward to what the future holds for Readington Township Schools as we move away from the COVID-19 pandemic and toward a post-pandemic school experience. Our district staff are looking to honor our retirees and seek to find the next best Readington teachers. Spring sports are on the horizon and I'm sure our teams will compete in a way that honors their hard work and dedication. The spring concerts and musical will be performed where our students will show off their talents in spectacular fashion. And, of course, we all look forward to summer. Time with family and friends at the beach or the pool and taking vacations to new, unexplored places. Embrace the spring as a time to "look forward" toward all that awaits us for the next few months!



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

Green Initiatives Continue with the Strategic Plan

In the last *Superintendent Sentinel* two articles appeared related to our continued commitment to green and sustainability initiatives within the district. These articles discussed the updates to our green policies and a report on district energy savings. Despite the pandemic, the district continues to investigate ways in which we can be eco-friendly, save energy, and promote responsible choices among our community. Our district strategic plan is infused with topics related to sustainability. As you may know our

district goals of partnerships and social awareness include specific action steps toward sustainability. These include curating partners with a focus on sustainability, green virtual and in-person field trips, enhanced parent and community communication with regard to our initiatives, and a curriculum that infuses Climate Change Standards per the Department of Education. To read more about our plan, visit the [Strategic Plan portion of our website](#).

Superintendent Coffee Chat – April 5, 2022



Please join Dr. Hart for our final Superintendent Coffee Chat of the 2021-2022 school year on Tuesday, April 5, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. virtually via Google Meet. The topic of conversation will be the **Specialized Special Education Programs**. Please RSVP to: rsvp@readington.k12.nj.us. For more information, please [click here](#).



Curriculum Corner District Tutoring Programs

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



The Readington Board of Education reviewed the mid-year student assessment results during their February 8th public meeting. District supervisors provided data from the beginning and midyear iReady Diagnostic for reading and math. While each assessment measures different domains of our students' academic performance and growth, the overall news is that Readington students are showing strong levels of performance. They are also surpassing growth expectations for this point in the year.

Teachers will address individual student results at upcoming parent conferences, and family reports were sent home for students in grades K-5 for reading and math. In grades 6-8, a notification of math results were provided to parents through Genesis which detailed how to access and interpret their child's assessment results. More detailed reports were provided upon request.

The district's newly launched [iReady Diagnostic](#) informational web page provides families with detailed information about the iReady assessment. This includes information about the purpose of the iReady diagnostic and a family guide. The family guide includes facts about the iReady platform, how to login, a user guide for accessing each child's individualized learning path, and tips on how to support your child. There is also a section to assist with understanding diagnostic results. This section consists of an interpretation guide and a video which will help families understand and interpret student results.

Families that would like additional information can investigate the [i-Ready Family Center](#) Website which is translated into 15 different languages. It contains a variety of videos, user guides, frequently asked questions, tips, and technical troubleshooting that families may find helpful.

The Readington community can be proud of the high growth and achievement levels demonstrated by our students. Through a combination of smart, dedicated teachers, parent support, and ambitious, hard-working students, there isn't anything we cannot achieve.

Tech Department

Technical Update for Students and Parents

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



Our district provides a number of online support resources for student Chromebooks. Located at www.readington.k12.nj.us/1to1 you will find links with helpful [Tech-Tips](#) as well as videos on how to help students [take care](#) of their chromebook at home and in school. Located on our [Tech@Home](#) page, you will find application specific support resources for Google classroom,

iReady, Clever and more. Want a more indepth look at what Chromebooks can do? Try the Google [Chromebook simulator](#)! This online simulation tool will give you a hands on virtual experience using a Chromebook. This is a great resource for learning about additional Chromebook features and capabilities.

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair"

– Shirley Chisholm / First Black Woman in U.S. Congress

Summer Enrichment

Mrs. Sherry Krial, Supervisor of Professional Development and Instructional Technology
Mrs. Colleen Ogden, Summer Enrichment Coordinator



This summer, the district is proud to offer an expanded program is for its students. We are offering a “Welcome to Kindergarten” class at each elementary school for incoming Kindergarten students for the first time. Workshops will be offered for our incoming 1st through 6th graders in the following areas: Arts & Crafts, STEM, and Kitchen Creations! For incoming 6th graders and new to the district seventh graders only, there will be a “Welcome to RMS” orientation course offered at the middle school. Each workshop is 2.5 hours (morning and/or afternoon) and will run two or four days per week.

Students can expect to engage in a variety of various activities based on their chosen topic. Kitchen Creations includes cooking and baking favorite recipes as well as dessert decorating and fun non-bake treats and snacks. STEM courses can include Legos, Escape Room type problem solving, hands-on science experiments, and coding. Arts & Crafts spans

well beyond popsicle sticks and yarn! Students work on various projects, including various mediums from paper to 3D items. The Welcome to RMS/Kindergarten classes are grade-specific and address the topics that make the transition more relaxing and comfortable.

Summer Enrichment courses will be held at district schools on **July 25 - 28, 2022**, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m., and **August 2 - 5, 2022**, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Additional information and registration information can be found on the Readington School District Summer Enrichment Website. Please [click here](#) to access. Registration is open and will run until May 1. Registration is on a first-come-first-served basis.

Our district prides itself on the valuable services it provides its community. Please join the Enrichment staff this summer to explore, play and learn. The Enrichment staff is eager to host the wonderful children in the district for creative and thoughtful projects and activities.

Summers are fun here in Readington – come join us! Please [click here](#) to register today!



District SEL Committee Goal

Mr. Anthony Tumolo, Supervisor of SEL and Special Projects



Every year we coordinate a district-wide committee centered around social and emotional learning (SEL), consisting of teachers from every school building. Our goals specifically connect to our district strategic plan relating to Social Awareness. This goal states: Our learners will feel connected, valued, and secure in digital and non-digital learning environments cultivated by a shared sense of community. Every individual will develop skills that promote an awareness of self and others as well as the environment, including the ability to understand the impact of their decisions.

This year, the committee's focus is to create a video library of best SEL practices for our teachers to access and review. The intention behind this on-going project is to showcase how SEL practices are woven into academic learning across all grade levels and classroom environments. For example, a teacher from the Autism Support Classroom is sharing ways she integrates SEL while teaching math. A second grade teacher is creating a teacher tutorial on how she thinks about SEL when planning her academic lessons. Some speech teachers are showcasing what SEL looks like for them in their classroom settings, while a fifth grade teacher

plans to model an effective classroom meeting to highlight responsible decision-making and to strengthen relationships.

Readington Middle School is taking a slightly different approach for this project. Mr. Adam Connelly, 6th grade school counselor, has proactively taken it upon himself to spear-head the district's first ever SEL podcast, entitled **"I've Gotta a Fever and The Only Prescription is More SEL."** The very first episode has been recorded and is ready to be shared. During this episode, Mr. Connelly chats with two Math teachers to discuss how they infuse SEL practices to enhance student learning. Together, they tackle tough subjects by offering personal stories and insights as to how they create a learning community centered on strong relationships and belonging. To access this exciting new educational resource, [click here](#). Please stay tuned for future episodes with some surprising guests.

This on-going video library project will hopefully help to educate staff members on effective ways to weave SEL with academic content and also serve as motivation for others to share their best classroom practices.

In Photos Below: Mr. Connelly with his first guests, Ms. Hendershot and Ms. Way



*"I raise up my voice – not so I can shout but so that those without a voice can be heard ...
We cannot succeed when half of us are held back."*

– Malala Yousafzai / activist for female education - youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient



Special Education Spotlight Autism and Social Skills

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services



April is Autism Awareness Month. Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex neurological and developmental disability that can cause a broad range of social, communication, and behavioral challenges. The typical age of diagnosis is between the ages of eighteen months to two years old. There is no one specific type of Autism, meaning that every individual on the spectrum has his/her own set of strengths and challenges. Since Autism is a spectrum disorder, many children and adults require different levels of support in their daily lives.

One big concern parents shared at the Readington Special Education Parent Advisory Group meetings this year is the difficulty their children have with social skills and making friends. For children with autism spectrum disorder, a central feature of ASD are social skills challenges that may include: initiating interactions, responding to the initiations of others, maintaining eye contact, sharing enjoyment, reading the non-verbal cues of others, and taking another person's perspective.

It's a common misconception that children with autism do not make friends because they are anti-social. Not true! Children with autism want to make friends and talk to others, but they don't always know how to do it properly. They often struggle with being able to maintain eye contact and understand social interaction. When someone says a child lacks social skills, it means he/she does not display expected behavior around other children, making it harder to make friends.

If you are a parent of a child with autism or other disability, you can practice positive social skills at home. Social skills help all children know how to act in different social situations – from talking to grandparents to playing with friends at school.

Social skills can help your child make friends, learn from others and develop hobbies and interests. Children with autism can learn social skills, and they can get better at these skills with practice. First, what are common social skills?

Social skills for children include:

- play skills – for example, taking turns in games or sharing toys
- conversation skills – for example, choosing what to talk about or what body language to use
- emotional skills – for example, managing emotions and understanding how others feel
- problem-solving skills – for example, dealing with conflict or making decisions in social situations.

What are some ways parents can foster social skills at home?

1. Social Stories: A social story is a story with a social element. Social stories are great if you want a child with autism to:

- Develop social skills (sharing, asking for help, saying thank you)
- Understand the feelings of others
- Understand one's own feelings
- Cope with unexpected changes
- Regulate emotions

2. Practice play skills with your child by using toys to act out different scenes. Play games such as Simon Says or tag. Older children may enjoy card games, Jenga or other board games. Practice taking turns with a preferred activity, such as taking turns blowing bubbles. Don't forget to give praise and encouragement!

3. Try role playing before a play date or social event. Create a problem that an older child may encounter and practice how to handle the situation. Practice, practice, practice!

4. Visual cues such as picture cards could be helpful to give a hint for conversational topics, or quiet hands., or a visual schedule of the event so your child knows what to expect at a social event or playdate.

5. As for playdates - keep playdates short and structured. Your child may be more comfortable in his/her own home. Try planning a physical activity such as jumping on a trampoline, swinging on swings, kicking a ball back and forth followed by a quieter activity such as puzzles or Legos. End the playdate with a snack. A visual schedule of the playdate may also be helpful.

Watch your child when he/she is with other children. Find your child's strengths and areas that your child needs to work on - those are the skills you want to practice at home.

Always, always reach out to your child's teacher or case manager! We are here to help and support you.

For more information on social skills, [click here](#). Please join the Readington Special Education Parent Advisory Group. Visit our Facebook page at [Readington Special Education Parent Advisory Group – SEPAG](#).

Readington Middle School Principal Search – Parent Survey

Mrs. Sharon Moffat, Readington Middle School Principal, has submitted her retirement. Mrs. Moffat will be missed by all of us. Please join me in wishing Mrs. Moffat all the best in this next chapter of her life.



Therefore, we have started our principal search process. As part of our search, we ask all parents of students in grades 5-8 to take time to complete a brief survey. As parents in our district, we would like to know what attributes and experiences you believe we should focus on during the search process. Please [click here](#) to access our parent survey. We look forward to hearing from all of you.



Budget Spotlight: Business Office

Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator



The Board of Education is in the process of finalizing its 2022-2023 budget, with final adoption planned for April 26, 2022, focusing on high-quality student programming and the following goals:

- Present a fiscally responsible budget at or below the 2% state-imposed cap on the tax levy aligned to the district mission and vision;
- Prepare for enrollment increases from [new housing developments](#);
- Balance class size guidelines with scheduling efficiencies;
- Enrich students' academic experiences;
- Continue to implement the district's [Strategic Plan](#) for the 2020-2025 school years.

Staff and program highlights in the 2022-2023 budget include:

- All educational programs and class sizes are maintained in accordance with district policies;
- A continuation of 1:1 chromebook/tablet initiative for students in K through 8th grade;
- Savings through shared services and cooperative agreements with Tewksbury, Branchburg, Hunterdon County E.S.C., Hunterdon Central, and the Township of Readington;
- Two additional full-time grade-level teachers at Whitehouse School due to increased enrollment from [new housing developments](#);
- Additional part-time physical education teacher and expansion of part-time music teacher to full-time;
- Reallocation of staff to create a new preschool disabilities program section;
- Student intervention services for learning acceleration due to the COVID-19 pandemic funded by federal grant programs such as accelerated learning programs with a late bus, homework help, and quarantine tutoring;
- Additional mental health services for both staff and students, as well as equity and inquiry learning consulting funded by federal grant programs;
- Student curriculum enrichment for green and sustainability programs, field trips, partnerships, software among others; and
- Continued implementation of the district's [Strategic Plan](#) work.

Further, the district plans for the following capital projects having no impact on next year's tax levy funded through district reserves as a result of prudent spending:

- Replacement of final roofing section at Holland Brook School;
- Renovation of Curriculum offices and the repair of the cupola at Three Bridges School;
- Enhancement of all four school building's outdoor classrooms and spaces;
- Stage sound system replacement at Holland Brook School and audio/ video upgrades in the board meeting room;
- HVAC unit replacement at Whitehouse and Holland Brook School due to aging of units;
- Hallway tile improvements at Readington Middle School and other maintenance projects; and
- Replacement of certain IT equipment / software district-wide to better support the student learning environment.

For more information on the Readington Township School District's 2022-2023 budget or to view the full budget presentation, please visit our district website or by [clicking here](#).

Building Spotlight: Readington Middle School

Mrs. Sharon Moffat, Principal



It is hard to believe we are already well into the 3rd marking period. Our Readington Middle School students have been hard at work, and they have been making great progress. We were fortunate that we were able to hold fall and winter athletics, and we are now looking ahead to our spring season. Our coaches and students are ready to get back on the athletic fields whether it is in lacrosse, baseball, softball, or track. Each student athlete represents RMS in a positive manner, and we are so proud of all of our athletes for their great attitude, determination, and sportsmanship.

Our 6th graders were able to participate in two virtual field trips sponsored by the Penn Museum in Philadelphia. In November, they virtually traveled to Mesopotamia. Then, in late January, the students took a virtual tour of Ancient Egypt, where they traveled inside the pyramids to the "False Doors". These are ancient Egyptian passageways between the worlds of the living and the dead. Each student created their own "False Door" as a culminating activity.

The school celebrated "Read Across America Day" on March 2 by wearing red for being "well-read". Some of the 6th graders read The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss, and they discussed the deeper themes of the book and its connection to historical fiction. In health classes, the students read articles from the Scholastic Health "Choices" magazine. Most of the 7th graders continued their work on their mystery book projects, while some others did a flash write about "Thing 1" and "Thing 2" from the book The Cat in the Hat. Congratulations to Elliott Kremer and Ryan Trapp for winning the Hunterdon County Librarians Association's Enthusiastic Reader Award for 6th and 7th grade. Teachers and librarians throughout the county recommend their students for this honor and one student from each grade is selected. They will be honored at a special event at the end of May.

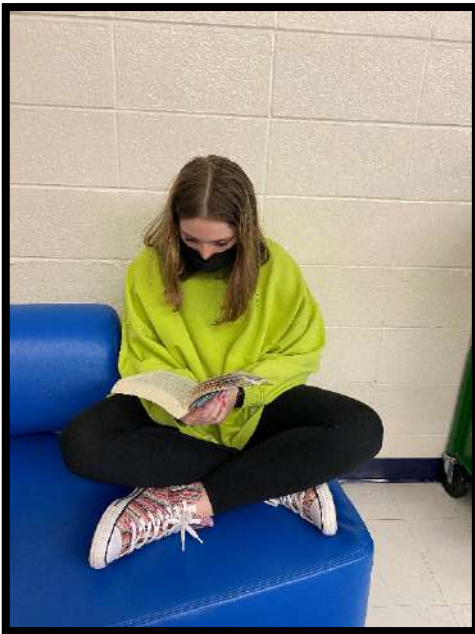
The cast and crew of Aladdin Jr. are thrilled to be back on the RMS stage! The talented cast of 6th, 7th and 8th graders have been singing, dancing and

acting to rehearse and share this classic story, under the direction of Ms. Lauren Greenberg, the play director, and Mr. Doug Radziewicz, the musical director. The stage crew design team has been planning and designing the wonderful sets, while the stage crew production team has been working on sound, lights and scene changes! The journey to Agrabah takes place on Thursday March 24th and Friday, March 25th at 7pm. Tickets are \$5 and will be sold at the door. We look forward to seeing you in, "A Whole New World!"

The RMS Student Council has been working hard for its school and local community throughout the course of this year with various building wide spirit days and fundraisers. They have raised money for the Emmanuel Cancer Society and America's Grow-A-Row by sponsoring Hat days at school where students and staff donated a dollar to wear a hat during the school day. In December they brought the whole school together and hosted a door decorating contest the week leading up to winter break. They are currently planning a similar event for spring. In November, the Student Council ran a Thanksgiving Food Drive and raised over 200 pounds of food. In February, they collaborated with our Life Skills program to host a food drive for the Flemington Food Pantry, and over 500 pounds of food was donated!

The 8th graders have a lot to look forward to with the end of the year activities. The Philadelphia Trip will take place on May 3. More information will be coming about the dance, the trip to Dorney Park, and the picnic. Graduation will take place on Hunterdon Central High School's athletic field at 4 PM on Monday, June 20. This will be a wonderful milestone for our 8th graders as they close the chapter on their Readington Schools experience and move onto high school. Continue to check the weekly Genesis e-mails for important information about RMS, including our monthly calendars. We are looking forward to a great end to the school year. Thank you so much for continuing to be a partner in your child's education.

Highlights from RMS in photos below:



Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- March 18 / Schools Open – Snow Makeup Day
- April 5 / Superintendent Coffee Chat
- April 14 / Early Dismissal – Spring Recess
- April 15-22 / Schools Closed – Spring Recess

Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- March 15, April 5, April 26, and May 10

