

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

October 2022



In Photo: Dr. Hart and Grade 6 G&T Students prepping the RMS Aeroponic Garden

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

This summer, my wife and I discovered the TV show Ted Lasso, and we immediately fell in love with the characters, the lessons, and the messages found within each episode. So much so that Ted Lasso became a cornerstone of my Welcome Back message for staff, parents, and students. Specifically, Ted's message of "be curious, not judgmental" as he challenges a foe to a game of darts resonated with me as an educator. Our mission and three goals of inquiry learning, partnership, and social awareness all revolve around this concept of curiosity before judgment. Educators seek to spark curiosity in students - the type of curiosity that keeps them wanting more. More teaching. More learning. More engagement. This is our ultimate goal, as it creates life-long learners. As we celebrated the Week of Respect this month, it's important to remember how curiosity is so much more powerful than judgment. The demonstration of curiosity itself is a show of respect. This week teaches us to show respect for ourselves, others, and the school community. When we allow curiosity, questions, and wondering to take priority over judgment or assuming we grow, change, and learn.

Now that the school year is well underway, let's remember how all of us - parents, teachers, staff, and community members - all seek to spark curiosity in the young people of Readington. This curiosity will promote critical thinking and problem solving as students tackle life-long work. This is how we will live our mission of empowering members of our community to lead purposeful lives with integrity, to cultivate a spirit of discovery, and to embrace connections in our diverse, global society. Welcome back!



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

Substitute Job Fair



The district is hosting a Substitute Job Fair on Thursday, October 27. There will be two sessions: Session I (10:00am-Noon walk-ins/appointments) and Session II (4:00-6:00pm appointments only). Please attend either session at the Readington Board of Education, 52 Readington Road, Whitehouse Station. If you are interested in becoming a substitute (teacher, paraprofessional, custodian, school bus driver, secretary, or nurse), please join us. For more information, please [click here](#). In addition, the district is hiring School Bus Drivers and will be conducting interviews at the Substitute Job Fair. We are offering the following School Bus Driver incentives: To set up an appointment or for additional information, please call 908-534-2896.

Curriculum Corner

Student Achievement Results

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



The Readington Board of Education reviewed 2021-22 student assessment results during their October 11th public meeting. District supervisors provided data from the spring administration of the NJSLA (New Jersey Student Learning Assessment) assessments, writing benchmarks, iReady results, and special education learning results. While each assessment measures different components of our students' academic growth, the overall news is that Readington students are surpassing state norms.

The New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) test is an online test that matches the rigorous content and skills outlined in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. These tests measure more complex, real-world skills such as critical thinking, writing, and problem-solving.

The NJSLA assessment uses five performance levels that delineate the knowledge, skills, and practices students are able to demonstrate, with Levels 4 and 5 considered to be passing:

Level 1 – Did not meet expectations

Level 2 – Partially met expectations

Level 3 – Approached expectations

Level 4 – Met expectations

Level 5 – Exceeded expectations

Our other assessment results show equally strong performance among Readington students. iReady reading and math indicate that students showed tremendous growth over the school year. Intervention programs are in place for those needing support. Sessions during the school day and after school are available for those students who qualify.

Finally, Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) assessments are administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for whom general state assessments are not appropriate. DLM assessments offer these students a way to show what they know and can do in mathematics, English language arts, and science. Results from DLM assessments support interpretations about what students know and can do.

If a student did not meet expectations on any of these assessments, this does not mean your

child did not learn or lost skills. Scores can be affected by things like stress and distraction. No one assessment can provide the full picture of your child's learning. Teachers take this into account and use multiple data points as one of many tools to understand your child's unique needs and progress. It is essential that instruction meets students where they are in order to help them grow academically.

Recovering from the disrupted instruction caused by COVID-19 over the past two years will be a multi-year process. The Readington community can be assured that the interventions the district has put in place continue to be successful and will be offered to qualifying students in the upcoming school year. A full presentation of the district's assessment results for the 2021-22 school year is available on the district website under the Curriculum tab. <https://www.readington.k12.nj.us>

Tech Department

New School Year - Tech Tips for Parents

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



Welcome Back Tech-Tips for Students and Parents!

Our Tech Team's goal is to provide a reliable technology experience for all students and staff. Our team is always available to assist with any technical issues or requests. Provided below are technology resources and contact information as a helpful reference for the upcoming school year.

- For general technology tips and support resources, please visit our [Tech@Home](#) portal.
- Chromebook Troubleshooting tips for more details [HERE](#).
- Kindergarten iPad support and how to use resources are located [HERE](#)
- Requests for technical support can be entered by going to: [rtps.incidentiq.com](https://incidentiq.com) Students can login with their Google [@readington.k12.nj.us](#) district email account.
- Walk in technical support is also available in the RMS middle school library **Monday-Friday 8-8:30 AM and 10:30-11:45 AM**
- For Genesis login or access issues, please email us at: genesis@readington.k12.nj.us
- For general technical inquiries or any other issues you can email our team at: techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us

Please reach out to me directly at any time with any feedback, questions or concerns. Have a wonderful school year!

Governor Educator of the Year Program – Nominations Due by Nov 1



Each year, Readington Township School District participates in the New Jersey Department of Education Governor's Educator of the Year Program. This program recognizes excellence in education, a direct result of the hard work of our outstanding classroom teachers and educational services professionals (please [click here](#) to access the eligibility criteria for the list of educational services professionals).

One of the most meaningful gestures to show appreciation to our staff would be to nominate them for the Governor's Educator of the Year recognition. Please [click here](#) for the 2022-2023 nomination form for this year's program. **To make a nomination, please complete this form and return it to your building principal by Friday, November 1, 2022.**

A selection committee at each school will review the nominations and jointly decide each school's honorees. At the end of the process, we will share all nomination letters with the teachers and educational services professionals who are nominated.

It is our hope that you will consider nominating one of our outstanding teachers and/or educational services professionals for this year's award.

“Teaching is the profession that teaches all the other professions” - Unknown

Capital Improvement Highlights

Mr. Jason M. Bohm, Business Administrator
jbohm@readington.k12.nj.us



The district has substantially completed the following capital projects having no impact on next year's tax levy funded through district reserves as a result of prudent spending:

- Enhancement of all four school building's outdoor classrooms and spaces;



RMS



HBS



TBS



WHS

- The repair of the cupola at Three Bridges School



- Renovation of the Curriculum office



- Replacement of final roofing section at Holland Brook School;
- Stage sound system replacement at Holland Brook School and audio/ video upgrades in the board meeting room;
- 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

“Be a bush if you can’t be a tree. If you can’t be a highway, just be a trail. If you can’t be a sun, be a star. For it isn’t by the size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.” – Martin Luther King Jr.



Sharing the Success of our 2022 Summer Enrichment Program

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

The Readington School District again offered a successful, sold-out Summer Enrichment program this July and August. For the first time, we offered a “Welcome to Kindergarten” class at each elementary school for incoming Kindergarten students. Workshops were also offered for our incoming 1st through 6th graders in the following areas: Arts & Crafts, STEM, and Kitchen Creations. Incoming 6th graders and new to the district seventh graders could also attend the “Welcome to RMS” orientation course offered at the middle school. Each workshop was 2.5 hours (morning and/or afternoon) and lasted two or four days per week.

Students engaged in a large variety of activities based on their chosen topic. Kitchen Creations included cooking and baking favorite recipes, dessert decorating, and fun non-bake treats and snacks. STEM courses include Legos, Escape Room type problem solving, hands-on science experiments, and group challenges. 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.

All classes were taught by district faculty, and the feedback was excellent. We intend to continue offering these options going forward and will announce the new summer program this January 2023. Readington School District prides itself on the valuable services it provides its community. Please join the Enrichment staff next summer to explore, play and learn. You may contact Colleen Ogden, the Summer Enrichment Coordinator if you have any questions or want information before January.



Special Education Spotlight

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services



Al's Pals Comes to Three Bridges School Preschool Programs this Fall

The doors to our Three Bridges Preschool opened in September 2008 and we continue to grow and expand each year providing a child-centered inclusive program for our youngest learners. This fall, we are excited to introduce Al's Pals to our preschool program this year. The Al's Pals program aligns directly with the five CASEL competencies that our district's social and emotional framework is rooted in; and provides a more direct approach to teaching to the social and emotional well-being of preschool students.

What is Al's Pals?

Al's Pals is a comprehensive early childhood program that supports the social-emotional learning and development of young children. Through fun and interactive lessons, engaging puppets, original music, Al's Pals creates caring, cooperative classrooms; teaches children to make healthy choices; and builds authentic family partnerships. Letters from Al are regularly sent home to inform parents about the life skills their children are learning and suggest activities parents can use to help their children practice and retain these skills, fostering that partnership between school and home.

Through 46 interactive lessons, Al's Pals teaches children how to:

- Express feelings appropriately
- Use kind words
- Care about others
- Use self-control
- Think independently
- Accept differences
- Make friends
- Solve problems peacefully
- Cope
- Make safe and healthy choices
- Understand that tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs are not for children

How it works

Al's Pals has 46 core lessons that capture real-life childhood experiences and provide opportunities for the children to acquire and practice social and emotional skills. The lessons are taught for 10 to 15 minutes twice a week. At the heart of the program is an original hand puppet named Al. Al serves as a positive role model to the children along with his puppet pals Ty and Keisha. Children are engaged through a wide range of teaching tools including scripted puppet-led discussions, guided creative play, original songs, posters, color photographs, message pads and books.

Through the lessons, children learn and practice positive ways to express feelings, relate to others, communicate, differentiate between safe and unsafe substances and situations, brainstorm ideas and solve problems. Our teachers can create a caring environment, encouraging independent thinking, self-control, healthy decision-making, and peaceful problem solving.

Building Spotlight: Whitehouse School

Dr. Ann DeRosa, Principal

We Are Cubs of Character!!!

Whitehouse School continues to focus on character education initiatives that are geared toward developing social and emotional skills in children.

Town Hall Meetings at WHS are opportunities to bring the entire school community together to reinforce character-building concepts and to celebrate. Each assembly is balanced with a mix of SEL talk, coupled with good old-fashioned dance party or pep rally action! We are looking forward to bringing back our Town Hall Meetings this year. Students and staff members will be wearing their red *Cubs of Character* shirts to show unity, especially on those days!

Family Conferences are similar to an advisor-advisee program in that children are placed in small co-mingled groups or *families*, and are led by an adult “matriarch” or “patriarch”. During a Family Conference, *families* discuss character traits and real-life examples of how we can show



The bucket-filling theme is further embedded throughout our school. Each week, we take time to write each other “bucket tickets” and we deliver them to the actual buckets that hang on hooks outside of



good character. As a noteworthy fact, the district supervisors also participate and have *families* at Whitehouse School, including Superintendent, Dr. Jonathan Hart, as well as the Director of Facilities, Mr. Don Race!

Whitehouse School students are *bucket-fillers*! Based on the work of author, Carol McCloud, students learn that we are all born with an invisible bucket, and we either fill each other’s bucket (good) or dip into buckets (bad). The staff teaches students to be bucket-fillers, not bucket-dippers. This year, all classroom teachers and cafeteria duty staff members will continue to ask children: *What does bucket-filling look like, sound like, & feel like?* Pictured here, Mrs. Kristen Frohn discusses each area with her students. Mrs. Valerie Zanardi (right), our Librarian, is pictured with Ms. Dina Phillips (left), our Cafeteria Manager, as they proudly display a *Cafeteria Code of Conduct* created through a bucket-filling lens.



each classroom. These notes of appreciation, kindness, and love serve as a vehicle to spread goodness throughout the school as we strengthen our sense of community.

Finally, we focus on a character trait each month. Each trait is strategically chosen based on the time of year or because of its alignment with other school initiatives. Students complete SEL homework or “bucket puzzles” as we encourage a home and school connection. As a means of sharing a common language between the school and the home environment, we ask parents to discuss acts of good character with their children as they earn parental permission to shade in

pieces or sections of the monthly bucket-filler puzzle. September is “responsibility” month, which will be followed by a month to study: “friendliness”, “gratitude”, “patience”, “fairness”, “caring”, “trustworthiness”, “grit”, “loyalty”, & “helpfulness”. Third graders, Moyosore Ogunmefun & Henley Haverick, are shown on our *Reflection Ramp* sharing their Responsibility SEL Homework.



All Four Readington Schools Achieve Top Honors from Sustainable Jersey for Schools

Mrs. Betsy Freeman, Coordinator of Green Initiatives and Sustainability



All Four Readington Schools Achieve Top Honors from Sustainable Jersey for Schools

This month Readington School District – and all four of its schools – will be honored at the New Jersey School Boards Association annual meeting for achieving Sustainable Jersey for Schools Silver, the highest certification level that Sustainable Jersey awards to schools. **Readington Schools is one of only three districts in the state to have achieved silver status across ALL of their schools.** The district is recognized as a leading example of sustainability excellence, providing outstanding learning opportunities for students. Mr. Randall Solomon, Executive Director of Sustainable Jersey, notes that certified schools, like Readington’s, serve as learning labs for students, staff, and schools across the state too. More than 1,000 schools participate in the Sustainable Jersey program.

Sustainable Jersey measures actions that capture school sustainability efforts to reduce waste, save energy, improve health and wellness, enhance school culture and climate, educate for sustainability, and build community partnerships. The benefits for certified schools are plenty, ranging from a comprehensive roadmap for sustainability, professional development, partnership opportunities, and extensive grant funding and resources.

Our collective planning and implementation of actions for sustainability is likewise comprehensive and extensive – from policies, procedures, and operations to educational programming and student learning and action. As Sustainable Jersey points out, our schools' Silver Certifications are a direct result of district-wide efforts to improve human and environmental health, integrate sustainability into student learning, boost recycling efforts, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and improve digital learning and equity. Mr. Solomon further observes that Sustainable Jersey certified schools serve as national leaders in implementing solutions to key sustainability challenges while proactively providing the next generation with the tools they need to help their communities be more resilient and better able to adapt to a changing environment. In addition to each of our school's unique achievements, all four schools have been honored nationally as U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

Why does sustainability matter? Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jonathan Hart, points to its natural integration with our district mission which embraces inquiry learning, partnerships, and social awareness, noting that the achievement of our Silver Awards from Sustainable Jersey exemplifies the interaction of all three goals. It starts with the need for our community to be aware of oneself, others, and the environment. From there, we ask difficult questions and partner with others to engage in projects that make our community a more environmentally friendly place. He adds, "We could not be more proud of this achievement. All four of our schools achieved silver certification, the highest level of certification offered by Sustainable Jersey for Schools. This is a testament to our district mission and vision of ensuring our community leads purposeful lives with integrity and developing an awareness of self, others, and the environment."

Longtime sustainability champion, Board Member, and Chair of the District Green Committee, Mr. Eric Zwerling shared, "Not only have we dramatically reduced the environmental footprint of the district's operations, with the promise of more to come, we've also saved hundreds of thousands of dollars, and taught hundreds of children to be environmentally mindful." Mr. Zwerling also thanked the Board for prioritizing and setting related Board and District Goals: "writing new policies, supporting green initiatives, and unleashing and empowering the creative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff to scrutinize every aspect of the district's operations from their unique ground-level perspectives."

Integral to our success, Facilities Manager, Mr. Don Race, tracks the impact of our school buildings and district infrastructure from natural gas and electricity usage to vehicle mileage and fuel use to environmentally friendly cleaning practices in our schools to ensure allergy- and asthma-safe learning environments. While Business Administrator, Mr. Jason Bohm, keeps an eye to our spending and aims for economically sound and eco-friendly purchasing and contracting from recycled paper and energy efficient equipment to providing fresh, locally-grown produce for students and staff.

Fresh off the press, Three Bridges Schools was just presented with the "Best in New Jersey Farm to School Award" by New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher last week. Principal, Dr. Kristen Higgins, and TBS staff were recognized for their exceptional efforts in connecting students with local produce. Secretary Fisher highlighted "their incredible outdoor garden, commitment to sourcing local produce from local farms, highlighting harvest of the month in the school cafeteria, and using an indoor vertical

growing system, as all key components of a high-quality Farm to School program.” TBS staff weave mindfulness and a connection to nature in student learning throughout the day. Special thanks to SEL Supervisor, Mr. Anthony Tumolo, for helping *all* to cultivate learning environments that are supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.

In addition to their own expansive connection to nature, National School of Character, Whitehouse School, was further recognized by Sustainable Jersey, with one of only 13 Digital Stars awarded this year. Digital Star schools embrace the mindful implementation of effective digital learning and communication tools, resources and practices. Star schools document their successful digital learning strategies in the action areas of leadership, learning practices, technology access, school culture and climate, and student learning. Ms. Sherry Krial, Supervisor of Staff Development and Technology, driver of our district’s commitment to digital learning along with district IT coordinator, Mr. Jim Belske, worked in tandem with Principal, Dr. Ann DeRosa, and her staff to ensure all student cubs of character at Whitehouse School practiced good digital citizenship too.

How does where we learn impact how we learn? At Holland Brook School, the study of how all living things are connected evolves as HBS students explore interconnected ecological systems on the south branch of the Raritan River. Designated as the first River Friendly School in the state by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, HBS students discover firsthand the importance of protecting our environment and how human activities impact water quality, which in turn impacts vegetation, wildlife, and ultimately humans too.

How does where we live impact how we learn? EcoAmbassadors at Readington Middle School were recognized this year for their Excellence in Watershed Science and Technological Innovation for their place-based storytelling and GIS work related to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 Life Below Water, as they tracked and researched the impact of school cafeteria waste in our waterways and oceans. Building on their HBS experiences on the south branch of the Raritan River, RMS students partner with Trout Unlimited and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection’s Fish and Wildlife Division as they raise trout from eggs in the fall and release the juvenile trout in the spring, testing and documenting the importance of healthy water for healthy life.

Sustainability is a collective effort. Kudos to ALL of our students, staff, faculty, and families for building the foundation of school success and sustainability in Readington. We also thank our local and global partners from the Readington Township Environmental Commission to Columbia University’s Center for Sustainable Development to Rutgers Master Gardeners to the US Green Building Council’s Green Schools Program to Raritan Headwaters Association to the UN-SDN Global Schools Program to Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation to the national Empowered Schools Program to The College of New Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools and to our *many* volunteers in Readington for their continued commitment, generously sharing their time, resources, and expertise with our students, staff, and school community. Together, we inquire, aspire, teach, learn, and collaborate for a sustainable and prosperous future for all, starting in our K-8 schools.

Please see the photos below from the Three Bridges School Best of NJ Farm to School Award Celebration with TBS Acting Principal, Mr. Anthony Tumolo.



Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- October 17-18 / Schools Closed – In-Service Days
- November 3 / SEPAG Meeting
- November 7-9 / Parent-Teacher Conferences
- November 10-11 / Schools Closed - NJEA Convention
- November 23 / Early Dismissal – Thanksgiving Recess
- November 24-25 / Schools Closed – Thanksgiving Recess
- December 23 / Early Dismissal Day – Winter Recess
- December 24-January 2 / Winter Recess



Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- October 11, November 15, and December 13, 2022

“You’ll miss the best things if you keep your eyes shut” – Dr. Seuss