

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

March 2023



Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

Last weekend my family and I took a ski trip to Vermont. Yes, this was the same weekend when meteorologists predicted 12-18 inches of snow for most of New England. My wife and I questioned if it was a good idea to even go given the snow prediction; we did anyway. We did so with the understanding that we may get snowed in and not be able to ski, go to dinner, or explore the little town where we stayed. As predicted, we got 12-18 of snow. It fell from Friday night through Sunday morning. Luckily, late morning on Saturday we got plowed out and roads were cleared allowing us to get to the mountain. The skiing was fantastic! The kids also enjoyed making snowballs and snow angels. It was a true winter wonderland.

This trip provided me and my family with some nice winter weather - something we lacked in New Jersey this past year. Now, we look to the spring season. As the end of the third marking period comes nearer and the weather gets warmer, I reflect on the past and look toward the future. The beginning of spring sports, the end-of-year celebrations, clap-outs, moving-up ceremonies, graduation, recognition of our staff and retirees, and summer break. The Board of Education along with Mr. Bohm and I are preparing a budget for the 2023-2024 school year. All of this has me looking *forward*. Forward to what is in store for your children and Readington schools. It's truly an exciting time of year. I hope you got your winter fix like I did because spring is just around the corner. Take some time to look forward to all that spring has to offer.



Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897

Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

In Photo Above: Luke and Logan Hart

Conversations from the Hart: A Podcast with Superintendent Jonathan Hart

Please [click here](#) to enjoy the second podcast with guest Ms. Carol Hample/Board President.



Parent Academy Night – An Evening of Discovery - March 28, 2023

“An Evening of Discovery” for all parents on Tuesday, March 28 (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.) at Holland Brook School. Our staff and students will facilitate workshops to help you support your child’s academic development and showcase some of the wonderful programs that we have in our district. For more information or to register for a session, please [click here](#).

“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.” – Mark Van Doren

Curriculum Corner

District Tutoring, STEM Club, Readers Theater

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



Readington Township Public School District is pleased to partner with YMCA of Bucks and Hunterdon Counties and Hunterdon Learning Center to provide after school opportunities for our students. Programs began in early February and are filled to capacity with students who are enthusiastic about learning.

YMCA of Bucks and Hunterdon Counties offered multiple opportunities to families that included a mix of literacy and STEM programs. Students could select to participate in Dream through STEAM using imagination, creation, and construction to build math and engineering skills. Reading Olympics is another option where students can read and enjoy books. Using a team format, students get to share with their friends the challenge of growing the number of books they read as well as increasing their exposure to a variety of writing styles and topics. Students who excel while working in teams have a chance to apply their collaborative skills

through STEAM Survivor, where they use mathematical reasoning and scientific inquiry to problem solve and work through STEAM based projects. Finally, the Minecraft STEAM Club is available where Minecraft is utilized to facilitate the learning of an array of subjects, including science, math, computer science, history, art and design with a fun twist.

In addition, there has been a positive response to Hunterdon Learning Center Math tutoring at Readington Middle School for qualifying students. This program offers students the opportunity for help in targeted math areas either before or after school.

This combination of enrichment and academic programs enables students to engage in a learning community, and we look forward to seeing students flourish academically and socially through these new opportunities.

Curriculum Corner

Summer Enrichment

Ms. Sherry Krial, Supervisor of Professional Development
Ms. Colleen Ogden, Summer Enrichment Coordinator



Thinking about plans for your summer? Readington School District has the ideal program for you! Join us for a half-day or full-day Summer Enrichment program offered **July 31 - Aug 3, 2023**, and for a half-day or full-day experience **August 10 - 13, 2023**. Workshops are offered for our incoming 1st through 6th graders in the areas of Arts & Crafts, STEM, and Kitchen Creations. Incoming 6th graders and new to the district seventh graders can also attend the "Welcome to RMS" orientation course offered at the middle school. Each workshop is 2.5 hours (morning and/or afternoon) and will run for two or four days each week. By popular demand, we have brought back our "Welcome to HBS" orientation course and our two-day "Welcome to Kindergarten" classes, to be held once at each school.

Our program is designed to engage our students. They are all hands-on programs and include self-directed as well as group activities. Kitchen Creations includes cooking and baking favorite recipes, simple dessert decorating, and fun non-bake treats and snacks. STEM courses include Legos, K'nex play, 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. This year's grade 1-3 program will focus on a specific theme for the week to allow students to learn as they create.

The Welcome to RMS, Kindergarten, and HBS orientation classes are grade-specific and address the topics that make the transition to each school more relaxing and familiar for the incoming students.

All classes are taught by district staff. Registration opened in February and will run until May 1st. Courses are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, and class sizes are limited to allow more individualized attention for each student. Readington School District prides itself on the valuable services it provides its community. We hope you'll join the Enrichment staff to explore, play and learn. Please [click here](#) to view our website for more information. If you have any questions, please email our Summer Enrichment Coordinator, [Ms. Colleen Ogden](#).

Curriculum Corner

Great Kindness Challenge

Mr. Anthony Tumolo, Supervisor of SEL and Special Projects



During the week of January 23, under the leadership of our incredible school counselors and support from our administrative team, Readington School District participated in the Great Kindness Challenge. This is a grassroots non-profit organization that was created by a high school student and a former teacher back in 2006. Their mission is to empower students to create a culture of kindness. Their motto, *"Kindness Matters"* is to spread the message that kindness is strength.

The RMS student council, under the facilitation of Ms. Jennifer Heller and Mr. Brian O'Neil,

developed a theme and school spirit wear for each day throughout the week. The counselors planned daily activities related to spreading kindness. This was the first year that every school participated as one district family. To kick off the festivities, the student council created a Kindness Matters sign out of plastic cups that can be seen from Readington Road. Throughout the week, our Readington students also participated in a district-wide service project organized by our counseling department. It was a collection to support St. Hubert's Animal Shelter. Here is a breakdown of activities that took place throughout the week.

Monday- The theme was *"kindness warms the heart"* and the spirit wear for the day was to wear warm, comfy clothing to show you are a warm and caring person. On this day 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students volunteered their time to teach a lesson about kindness to their younger peers. 8th grade students were partnered with a 5th grade classroom, 7th grade students were partnered with a 4th grade classroom and 6th grade students were spread out at WHS and TBS. The middle school students who chose to remain in their building wrote a letter to a 5th grade student about how middle schoolers show kindness at RMS.

Tuesday- The theme was *"kindness is seeing the best in others"* and the spirit wear for the day was to wear glasses/sunglasses to see acts of kindness. The activity for the day was for students to give kind compliments to others. This activity is called "toodling" or bucket-filling, which is the opposite of tattling or bucket-dipping.

Wednesday- The theme was *"kindness can be started by one, but finishes with everyone!"* The spirit wear for the day was to wear a sports jersey to show you are part of the kindness team. The activity for the day was to offer to help at least three people.

Thursday- The theme was *“kind words result in kind feelings”* and the spirit wear was to wear red to show you have a kind heart. The activity for the day was to send five hearts to someone to warm them up with kindness.

Friday- The theme was *“be somebody who makes everybody feel like somebody”* and the spirit wear was to wear bright colors to brighten someone's day. The activity for the day was to try and get five people to smile.

The counseling department has already begun to plan for next year's district-wide event. Our goal is to partner with a neighboring school district to bridge connections not only between our own schools, but also with other students in our

community. Like all firsts, there is room to grow, however this was a huge success because it gave our students and staff an opportunity to come together and spread kindness around, which ultimately supports who we are.

We are Readington: Together, Inquire, Inspire.



“It takes courage to be kind.” – Maya Angelou

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 technology budget this year will focus on three new priorities, upgrading our network hardware, enhancing telecommunication infrastructure and security. Phase 1 of a planned network switch upgrade will provide enhanced Internet bandwidth and redundancy while also providing capacity for future district needs and growth. In addition, the network upgrade will provide a foundation to support additional phase 2 & 3 infrastructure upgrade initiatives planned over the next few years.

We will also be transitioning our onsite telecom phone system to an externally hosted platform. This initiative will assist our district in complying with new FCC regulations focusing on enhancing communications and providing increased onsite security capability. Additionally, this platform will offer off site accessibility to our phone systems in the event of a prolonged power or network outage.

Related to our efforts in improving district security will be a phased upgrade of our existing on-site video camera surveillance system. Our initial focus will be on replacing external video cameras with improved reliability and optical resolution capability. Additional phases will then focus on upgrading our internal cameras including servers running the video surveillance platform.

These technology initiatives will help support our strategic goals for inquisitive learning as well as technology department goals for this school year and beyond.

- 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 or 908-386-2502.

Screenagers

Modeling Better Family Communication Around Technology



Dr. Delaney Ruston, MD., is forever thinking about the challenges of modeling healthier screen time habits for kids. Screenager's latest blog is about improving communication and understanding of what people are doing on their devices, and it is also about modeling having more mindfulness of what one is

doing. The blog offers a model of how to break down screen time and how it can be helpful to model saying to family members which of these three things you are doing on your devices: Tool, Talk, or Treat? Please [click here](#) to view Dr. Delaney Ruston's entire article on this subject.

**"EdTech is not about doing things better.
It's about doing BETTER THINGS." – Unknown**

2023-2024 Budget Highlights

Mr. Jason M. Bohm, Business Administrator

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The Board of Education is in the process of finalizing its 2023-2024 budget, with final adoption planned for April 25, 2023, focusing on high-quality student programming and the following goals:

- Present a fiscally responsible budget inclusive of a 2% state-imposed cap on the tax levy with allowable adjustments 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 currently planned for in the 2023-2024 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;
- Collaboration with the [Township of Readington Police Department](#) to allow for 1 police officer to be present in each school building, now a total of 4.
- A new art teacher position and intermediate school grade-level teacher due to increased enrollment from [new housing developments](#);
- Expansion of part-time English as a Second Language teacher to full-time, the preschool disabilities program for an additional preschool teacher, as well as a part-time secretary for the Curriculum Department;
- Reallocation of staff to create a behavioral disabilities program;
- Student intervention services for learning acceleration due to the COVID-19 pandemic funded by federal grant programs such as private tutoring, homework help, YMCA and club programming afterschool, among many others;
- Additional mental health services for both staff and students;
- 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:

- Creation of 4 new classroom bathrooms in the elementary buildings for student needs;
- Replacement of roofing section and HVAC upgrades at Readington Middle School;
- Expansion of solar arrays district-wide to provide the vast majority of electric utility needs;
- Backend IT upgrades such as security cameras, phone systems, core switches, among others;
- Enhancement of all four school building's staff lounges;
- Filtered, cold water bottle filling stations throughout Readington Middle School, and a renovation of the outdoor gardens at Whitehouse School; and
- Various security upgrades based on strategic planning and other maintenance projects.

For more information on the Readington Township School District's 2023-2024 budget or to view the full budget presentation, please [click here](#).

Building Spotlight: Readington Middle School

Mr. Timothy Charleston, Principal



The school year of 2022-2023 has been flying by at Readington Middle School. This being my first full year as Principal, I can say, without a doubt, that this is quite the amazing place to work and to learn. We have had much to celebrate over the past few months. Below you will find a highlight of just a few of the great things that have happened here at RMS!

- Our athletic program has been in full swing here, with a successful fall and winter season. We look forward to our spring athletics finishing strong these next few months. The coaches and student-athletes have really been giving their all over the course of the year. We are proud of them and all of those who have come up to support them.
 - The Readington Middle School girls' volleyball team finished out their season with a 12-1 record, earning them the top seed for the conference tournament. They played the conference championship game on Friday, October 28, 2022, against William Annin Middle School and beat them in two straight sets with a second set score of 29-27 to win the title. This is the first time in school history that Readington Middle School has won the CJSVL - Central Jersey Junior Schools Volleyball League Conference.
- RMS also has a full slate of wonderful co-curricular clubs as well! From cooking club to gaming club, there is something for each student. In fact, there are twenty-two (22) clubs offered at RMS.

There is always something for a student to do! I encourage each student to join at least one club or sport, if they can, as a way to meet new friends and experience new ideas.

- RMS brought back some great experiences for our students and staff, including assemblies, pep rallies and field trips!
 - On Friday, September 9th, RMS kicked off the school year with a whole school pep rally and what a way to kick off the year. Our students and staff, by grade, wore specific RMS colors to show off their school spirit. We were able to come together as a family to introduce all of the staff to the students. We played some minute to win games with the students and also had a surprise teacher dance off to end the pep rally! We were so excited to be all together for this event and the message of "Being Kind" was woven throughout the rally. We want kids to be kind and to be Valuable Vikings here at RMS!
 - On Friday, October 7th, RMS brought in Dialed In Action Sports to showcase their BMX skills and to share messages about safety and anti-bullying. RMS would like to thank the HSA for partnering with us to bring in this amazing, one of a kind assembly! It was an excellent way to cap off the Week of Respect here at Readington Middle School.
 - Our 6th graders were able to participate in a virtual field trip sponsored by the Penn Museum in Philadelphia.
 - Our 7th graders went on a "Walk in the Woods" to see nearby nature.

- Our 8th graders went to Fairview Lakes, a YMCA camp for team building and bonding in nature in the fall.
- The cast and crew of Willy Wonka 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 Ms. Emily Obenauer, the musical director. Students in grades 6-8 came out for auditions in mid-November to be a part of the Cast & Stage Crew. Once the show was cast, they had their first read through of the script with the full cast, crew and creative staff. The cast and crew were excited to present Willy Wonka Jr. on March 2-3, 2023! Please see the photo below of the cast.

Readington Middle School is a recognized Green Ribbon School. We also have recently been awarded the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Silver certification! Finally, Readington Middle School is also a recognized Kindness Certified School through the Great Kindness Challenge.

These are just a small sample of the wonderful things that go on here each and every day at Readington Middle School. We look forward to an amazing end to the school year.



Special Education Spotlight

Readington School District Preschool Program

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services
Mrs. Dauernheim, Mrs. DaQuisto, Mrs. Caroline Robb, PreSchool Teachers



The Readington School District offers a continuum of preschool programs to meet the needs of our youngest learners. Each of our programs is a structured, language rich, play-based learning environment that has a strong based social and emotional learning (SEL) component. This year the AI's Pals social and emotional learning curriculum was implemented in our preschool classrooms and provides an age-appropriate SEL program for our youngest students. AI's Pals encourages children to think about their feelings. The children love the engaging puppet songs and activities which they apply the skills taught in school and at home.

Our integrated preschool program, which includes general education students and special education students, is a structured classroom that uses the play-based Creative Curriculum along with a focus on kindergarten readiness skills. Mrs. Robb, the preschool teacher, describes her classroom as a structured, full of love, acceptance and understanding classroom. She incorporates many different techniques and teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Daily morning meetings promote social interaction, problem-solving skills, and to create a strong & positive classroom environment. Students are taught coping skills through role play, modeling, and daily practice in mind-body movements including breathing, dance and yoga.

The Readington School District also offers a Preschool Disabilities Program for children that have an individual education plan (IEP). This program is exciting, engaging and highly structured. It is extremely language based and encourages participation from all children. Mrs. DaQuisto, the preschool teacher, meets the varied range of abilities through the play based Creative Curriculum that supports social emotional development as well as school readiness skills. All aspects of the day are language based and encourage social conversation and age-appropriate problem solving skills.

The third preschool program offered in the district is the Extended Day Preschool Disabilities program which provides multi needs and supports for children with an individual education plan (IEP). The extended day program is a structured and language based program that incorporates the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in a nurturing, safe, and fun setting. There is an emphasis on functional skills specifically in the areas of self-care, communication, and socialization, as well as the generalization of those skills to home and the community. Visual and behavioral supports are embedded in the program and are unique to each learner. Each learner's program is based on individual need and ability. Mrs. Dotro and Ms. Dauernheim, the teachers of the extended day program, also infuse SEL by helping young learners develop an awareness of emotions and build social relationships. The learners may experience difficulty with understanding and regulating their own emotions. In addition, engaging in social interactions can be complex as the learners are being taught how to appropriately use social language and read the facial cues/body language of others. In the extended day program, the teachers target a specific SEL goal weekly and break it down into teachable components through modeling and positive reinforcement

The Readington Township Preschool Program has a dynamic multidisciplinary team of professionals that provide direct and indirect related services to the youngest learners. In addition to the general education and special education teachers and the dedicated paraprofessionals in the preschool classrooms there are several other members of the team that play a critical role in the success of the program. The team

includes: Mrs. Courtney D’Onofrio, preschool speech and language therapist; Mrs. Kelly Marella the occupational therapist, Mrs. Carrie DeStefano, the physical therapist; Mrs. Zelia Lopes-Shreiber the behavior specialist and Mrs. Heather Gibbons, the preschool case manager for the students with IEPs. The related services of speech, OT and PT are provided to those students who meet the criteria for those services; however, the specialist provides consultation services to teachers when there are questions of concern.

When the team was asked what they feel is the strongest component of the preschool programs, unanimously they shared the connections with the students and families.

The Readington School District is currently taking applications for the 2023-2024 school year. For more information and to complete an application, please [click here](#).

In the photo below: Mrs. Robb and paraprofessionals Ms. Carli Stokes and Ms. Nicole Smith present an AI's Pals lesson with puppets.



Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- March 17 / Schools Closed – In-Service Day
- March 20 / Schools Closed – Snow Contingency Day
- March 28 / Parent Academy – Night of Discovery
- April 6 / Early Dismissal – Spring Recess
- April 7-14 / Schools Closed – Spring Recess



Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- March 14, April 4, April 25, and May 9, 2023

“Play is the highest form of research.” – Albert Einstein