

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

June 2024



Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

As the school year comes to a close, I take this opportunity to look back on all that has been accomplished since September. Overall, I have found the 2023-2024 school year to be one that propelled the Readington Township Schools forward.

Our district moved several important goals forward over the course of the year. First, we remained focused and committed to our strategic work in promoting inquiry, partnerships and social awareness. To that end, the RMS therapy dog program excelled, student passion projects were investigated, teachers continued inquiry projects and are looking to share their scholarly work beyond Readington. Partnerships were strengthened in 8th grade where Civics projects involved more community stakeholders and students went out into the community to engage in service learning. Our strategic mission remains a focus as we move into next year.

The success of the preschool program is immeasurable. The district opened classrooms at TBS, WHS and three private providers to offer free, universal preschool to approximately 105 3- and 4- year olds. This was all done in less than 4 months. Further, the district will expand preschool to over 200 seats for next school year! The positive impact universal early childhood education will have on our community will remain for years to come.

Academic achievement improved as we moved into this year. The NJSLA scores demonstrate that the district students are achieving virtually to pre-pandemic levels. iReady diagnostic data shows substantial growth made by students as we finish the 2023-2024 school year. I am so proud of our student's hard work and dedication to learning!

Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897

Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr



In Photo Above: Dr. Hart – HC Superintendent of the Year

Hunterdon County Superintendent of the Year

It was announced at the June 11 Board of Education meeting by the Hunterdon County Association of School Administrators that Dr. Hart has been named the Hunterdon County Superintendent of the Year. Please [click here](#) to view the formal announcement.



Readington Middle School Renovation Project

Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator



Readington Middle School is embarking on a dramatic change for the upcoming school year with the complete renovation of the middle school main office, school counselors and nurse suites. The project budget is comprised of \$2.8 million and shall commence this summer extending to winter break.

The project entails a complete redesign spearheaded by staff desires and future needs including:

- Removal of asbestos for better air quality and health of staff and students;
- Modernized counselor and mental health offices to aid in student well-being;
- Enhanced privacy and safety layout of the nurse suite for health in a post-pandemic world;
- Security vestibule augmentations for stronger safety protocols and measures, including a collaborative police officer designated workspace near the visitor entrance;
- Removal of wall and window air conditioners for installation of efficient heat-pump HVAC systems in-line with sustainability efforts;
- Replacement of out-of-warranty roof aged over 25-years with a new, multi-layered roofing system with enhanced drainage;
- Larger and more dynamic conference room spaces for team and parent meetings;
- Renovation of bathrooms, increase in storage, and skylights for natural light infusion;
- Brand new furniture and counseling elements; and a
- New lounge space for staff well-being, among other aspects.

Unfortunately, due to the large scope of the project, construction shall extend into the fall of 2024 and continue while staff and students are inside the building. For utmost security and safety, the entire main office shall be sealed from the rest of the building and a construction, privacy fence shall be installed for workers to enter and exit the main office through an exterior wall. All major demolition and use of major equipment shall occur in the summer, with the roof and nurse offices anticipated to be complete before the start of the school year. Primarily aesthetic work in the main office will be left for September through December while the building is occupied. Workers shall have supplies within the fence to avoid any interaction with students and personnel during the school day, and a freeze of worker movement entering and exiting the site shall occur at arrival and dismissal. All other aspects of the building will remain intact, with parent drop-off and pick-up

still occurring at the front entrance and full functionality of the vestibule, where visitors shall enter and/or parents can drop off student materials if forgotten.

The district is thrilled to be able to transform the Readington Middle School main office without any additional costs to taxpayers as district reserves shall be utilized to fund the project outside of the tax levy through efficient budget and fiscal restraints spearheaded by the Board of Education. More design elements and visual aspects are anticipated to be shared as the project unfolds. The district thanks you in advance for your patience as construction is undertaken, and is looking forward to showing the amazing results upon completion with the community. As always please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Jason M. Bohm for more information.

"Every child who constructs a house out of sticks or stones or blocks is an architect." – Unknown

Readington Middle School Renovation Project Photos



Floorplan - Front Reception



Floorplan - Counselors Offices



Floorplan – Conference Room



Floorplan – Assistant Principal Office



Floorplan – Principal Office



Make Summer Learning a Family Affair

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



School's out for summer, but that doesn't mean learning has to stop. Summer break is the perfect time for families to incorporate lessons into daily activities—and even vacations—to keep kids engaged and their minds active. These fun, brain-friendly activities are a great place to start.

Set Expectations

Tell your child that reading and learning activities will be an important part of their summer, but make sure they know they'll still have lots of time for play.

Create Mini Lessons

Everyday activities make great learning opportunities. Have kids count change, write a shopping list, or calculate a recipe's measurements.

Encourage Creative Writing

Have your child keep a summer journal, write letters to family members or friends, or start a family cookbook with your favorite recipes, instructions, and shopping lists.

Read Daily

Set aside at least 15 minutes a day for your entire family to read. (That means parents, too!) Organize a summer read-a-thon with goals for each family member, or sign your child up for your library's summer book club.

Let Them Play

Schools often use playful learning in the classroom. To boost playful learning at home, encourage kids to play matching or guessing games or solve puzzles. Go for a walk and have them look for shapes in the neighborhood buildings or playground equipment or hunt for letters or words around town. Setting up a restaurant or a shop is full of learning opportunities for kids, too.

Travel Around the Globe—Virtually

Have an international evening where you cook a meal with recipes from a different country. Learn basic words in that country's language. Find the country on a map, and read a book or an article about what life is like there.

Learn During Family Trips

On vacation, stop at zoos, children's museums, or historic sites. Have your child help you plot out the trip using maps and keep a journal along the way. Older kids can tally up miles, keep track of expenses, or compute gas mileage.

Promoting a child's love of learning is one of the most important things we can do as parents to put our children on the road to success. Keep the learning alive this summer and reap the benefits in the fall when your child goes back to school with confidence.

"In the summer, the days were long, stretching into each other. Out of school, everything was on pause and yet happening at the same time, this collection of weeks when anything was possible."

– Sarah Dessen

Summer Spark – Enrichment Program

July 15-18 and July 22-25

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



Our district's Summer Enrichment program is expanding, and we are thrilled to introduce new and revised courses for students in grades K - 6. The changes to our program reflect our commitment to providing diverse and engaging learning opportunities and maximum value to our community. Our revised program names better represent the changing content and creative offerings. Despite these exciting changes, our prices remain the same, and scholarships are available for those in need.

New to our offerings this year is "Stage Stars," in which students are introduced to various songs and performance techniques. At its conclusion, family and friends are invited to enjoy their Showcase Performance. Additionally, each of our existing courses has deepened its curriculum, offering "Theme Weeks" and more intricate projects. For example, the Innovative Explorers classes now include robotics and age-appropriate coding, while the Culinary Creators will make more complex snacks and simple meals. You will be impressed with the selections and recipes they bring home with them to share. Crafting Campers themes such as "Ocean Life" or "Animals" are filled with fun projects to expand children's artistic horizons, which you will see reflected in the creations they bring home each week.

Our popular "Warm Welcome" courses are almost sold out. Kindergarten Kickoff, Bobcat Beginnings, and Middle School Mingle are available for students entering a new building in

the fall. These grade- and building-specific courses aim to make the transition to the new year more relaxing and comfortable while at the same time offering fun activities and friendship-making opportunities for students to enjoy.

We have enhanced all of the Summer Spark course offerings to ensure that no content is repeated in consecutive weeks within a summer or two summers in a row. This new approach means that returning students will have a fresh experience each time they participate in a course.

Flyers were sent home with district students, providing details of each session. With the exception of our Warm Welcome courses, Summer Spark will be held at HBS on July 15 - 18, from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM, and on July 22 - 25, from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. Additional information and details can be found on the District Summer Spark Website via this link: <https://bit.ly/SummerSpark-RPS>. Registration is now closed. Payment was due at the time of registration. If you have not yet paid, please send your payments as soon as possible.

We take pride in providing this valuable service to our community and invite all district students to join the Summer Spark staff this summer for creative and innovative projects and activities. If you have any questions, please email the Program Coordinator at the link below: SummerEnrichment@readington.k12.nj.us.

"Summer is messy, summer is fun, summer is spending all day in the sun, summer is campfires, smores, and late nights, summer is windy days spent flying kites, summer is tan lines and splashing in lakes, summer is mornings with pancakes, summer is time spent with family and friends, summer is hoping that it never ends." – Unknown

Get to Know Our Next Readington Middle School Assistant Principal Mrs. Jennifer Mooney

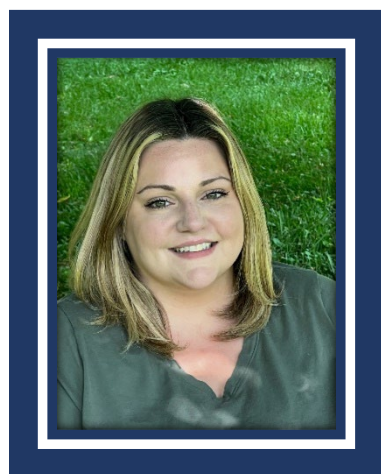
The Readington Township School District is thrilled to announce the appointment of Mrs. Jennifer Mooney as the next assistant principal of Readington Middle School effective July 1, 2024. The appointment of Mrs. Mooney was approved by the Readington Board of Education at their meeting on May 14, 2024. Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools was pleased to announce Mrs. Mooney as the next assistant principal of Readington Middle School.

Mrs. Mooney is a graduate of Caldwell University with a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education & Early Childhood and The College of New Jersey with a Masters of Arts in Education. In addition, she obtained her NJ Administrators Certification from NJEXCEL.

Mrs. Mooney brings a wealth of experience and an unmatched enthusiasm and dedication for this new role. She comes to the district having served as the Whitehouse School Preschool Relief Teacher for the past few months. Before that she worked for ten years at the Clifton Public Schools District as a Basic Skills Teacher and a Classroom Teacher. Mr. Charleston, Readington Middle School Principal, shared; "What stood out about Jenn during this process was her commitment to working with students, her fair and equitable approach to discipline, and her thoughtfulness in working with teachers. What also came through was her passion for working with kids."

Mrs. Mooney previously served as a building coach for positive behavior interventions. This experience will undoubtedly come in handy as she recognizes students for their good behavior with Valuable Viking and Student of the Week awards. Mrs. Mooney has a passion for working with kids. She will have a positive impact on the lives of our students, staff, and families.

Mrs. Mooney and her husband Ryan reside in Readington, NJ with their son Brayden age five. Brayden will attend Three Bridges School for Kindergarten in the fall. Mrs. Mooney is a lover of iced coffee, Italian food, a good book and sports. She played softball and volleyball. The Mooney family enjoys spending vacations and breaks in Myrtle Beach. Please join us in welcoming Mrs. Mooney to the RMS Viking Family!



welcome
★ TO THE ★
TEAM





Two Board Members Receive Recognitions

Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent

Beth Fiore and Jennifer Wolf, two Readington Board of Education members, were honored at the May meeting of the Hunterdon County School Boards Association. Mrs. Fiore received an award for obtaining *Board Member Certification*. In order to achieve this Mrs. Fiore was required to earn at least 20 cumulative Board Member Academy credits, attend at least four county meetings, attend at least one annual NJSBA Workshop, attend at least one NJSBA Delegate Assembly, attend at least one statewide or regional professional development program, and complete at least three full years of service as a local board member. Mrs. Wolf received an award for obtaining *New Board Member Certification*. This distinction required Mrs. Wolf to accumulate at least 10 Board Member Academy credits, attend face-to-face Governance I: New Board Member Orientation,

attend at least one statewide or regional professional development program, attend at least two county association meetings, attend at least one annual NJSBA Workshop Conference, and Mrs. Wolf had to complete all of this within her first two years of service. Both Mrs. Fiore and Mrs. Wolf achieved all of this in addition to their regular responsibilities and duties as members of the Readington Board of Education. They truly went above and beyond to show their commitment and service to the community of Readington.

The evening was also very special because Gargi Adhikari, Hunterdon County Teacher of the Year and HBS Special Education Teacher, was also honored. Mrs. Adhikari provided an inspiring speech to all of the attendees.



In Photo (left to right): Mrs. Fiore, Ms. Pauch, Mrs. Adhikari, Dr. Hart and Mrs. Wolf

“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.” – Vince Lombardi

Building Spotlight: Three Bridges School

Dr. Kristen Higgins, Principal



At Three Bridges School, we are thrilled to share some exciting news with you regarding your child's progress in reading and writing! With the piloting of the Heinemann Flights program in kindergarten and first grade at TBS this year, we've witnessed remarkable growth and enthusiasm among our students and teachers. The journey through phonics and literacy has been truly inspiring.

Building Foundations with Phonics

At the heart of our success lies the solid foundation of phonics. Phonics is the key that unlocks the world of reading and writing for our young learners. Through Heinemann Flights, our students have been immersed in systematic phonics instruction, enabling them to decode words with confidence and accuracy.

Next Steps in Phonics

As we look ahead to the next school year, we're excited to share what's in store for your child's phonics development:

- **Kindergarten:** Your child will embark on the journey of the alphabetic principle. They will begin by learning to recognize and name each letter of the alphabet, followed by understanding the primary sounds associated with each letter. Activities like rhyming games and multisensory learning further enhanced their phonemic awareness, setting the stage for reading success.
- **Grade 1:** Building upon their foundational knowledge, students will dive into more complex phonics skills. From blending and segmenting sounds to recognizing word families and patterns, they'll expand their reading repertoire with confidence.
- **Grade 2:** In the second grade, students will master advanced phonics concepts such as diphthongs, digraphs, and long vowel sounds. Fluency practice and word analysis will further solidify their reading skills, empowering them to tackle more challenging texts with ease.

Sound Walls

We have also seen children empowered in their reading and writing through the use of Sound Walls. In addition to systematic phonics instruction, our teachers are implementing Sound Walls in the classroom. Sound Walls are visual displays that organize and categorize the different sounds in our language, helping students recognize patterns and make connections between letters and sounds. By referring to the Sound Wall, children can tackle hard words more confidently, as they have a visual reference for decoding unfamiliar sounds and spelling patterns.

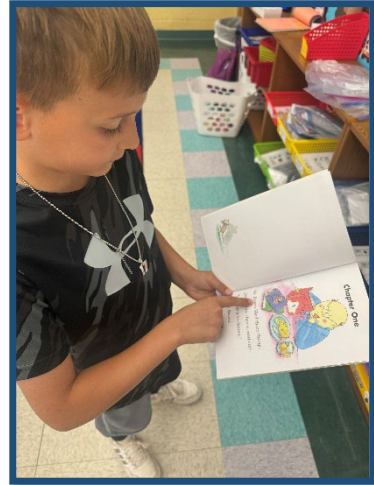
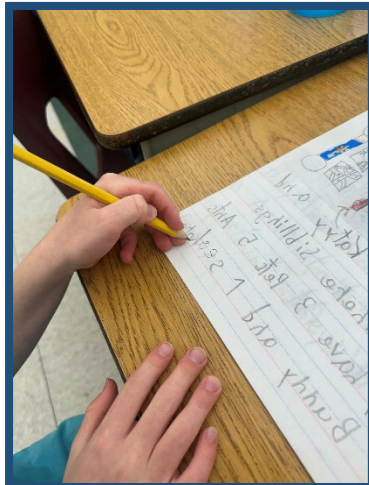
Supporting Your Child's Literacy Journey at Home

We are making great progress in school. If you would like to assist in your child's literacy development here are some tips to support your child's phonics and reading comprehension at home:

- **Phonics Development:** Start early and practice regularly with fun, multisensory activities like alphabet games and letter tracing. Celebrate your child's progress and provide positive reinforcement along the way.
- **Reading Comprehension:** Encourage your child to ask questions, discuss the text, and make connections to their own experiences. Foster visualization and expand their vocabulary by exploring new words together.

- **Foster a Love of Reading:** Make reading a cherished part of your daily routine by incorporating it into family time. Visit the library together, model reading behavior, and let your child see the joy of getting lost in a good book.

By nurturing your child's literacy skills both at school and at home, we're laying the groundwork for their academic success and lifelong love of learning. Together, we can empower our children to soar to new heights in their literacy journey.



Music Department Spotlight NAMM Foundation Best Communities for Music Education

Mr. John Hylkema, Music Teacher



Readington Middle School's Music Department recently treated the public to a spectacular spring concert, featuring two world premieres and a special guest soloist. Under the direction of Mr. John Hylkema, Mr. Jack Hasselbring, and Ms. Jess Richter, the event showcased the incredible talent and hard work of the students, leaving the audience in awe.

The 7th Grade Band kicked off the concert with the world premiere performance of "Salt Water Taffy" by the talented composer Nadine Silverman. The piece captivated the audience with its lively and vibrant melodies, showcasing the dedication and skill of the young musicians.

Following this remarkable performance, the 8th Grade Band took the stage to debut "Classified" by Franklin Hansen. The world premiere of this piece was met with great enthusiasm from the audience, as the band delivered a flawless and powerful rendition of the composition.

Another highlight of the evening was the performance by the Orchestra, which featured a special guest artist, Victoria Witmer, a former student of Readington Middle School. Victoria's return to her alma mater was a memorable moment for both the audience and the students. In addition to being a featured soloist, Victoria was a visiting clinician during orchestra rehearsals, and she was able to guide the orchestra students towards a successful performance. Her exceptional talent and artistry added a new dimension to the concert, leaving a lasting impression on everyone in attendance.

In addition to the outstanding performances, the Readington Township Music Department received well-deserved recognition from the NAMM Foundation as one of the Best Communities for Music Education in the county. This prestigious acknowledgment is a testament to the department's commitment to providing exceptional music education and opportunities for its students.

The concert was a testament to the dedication and hard work of the students, teachers, and staff of the Music Department. It provided a platform for the young musicians to showcase their talents and passion for music, while also highlighting the collaborative and supportive environment fostered by the department.

The event not only celebrated the students' musical accomplishments but also served as a reminder of the importance of music education in schools. It emphasized the positive impact of music on young minds, promoting creativity, discipline, and teamwork.

The spring concert was a resounding success, leaving the audience inspired and impressed by the exceptional musical talent displayed by the students. It was a night filled with beautiful music, memorable performances, and a sense of pride for the entire Readington Middle School community.



In Photo (left to right): Dr. Brown, Mr. Hylkema, Mr. Tipton, Ms. Obenauer, Mr. Hasselbring, Ms. Levesque, and Dr. Hart (not pictured: Ms. Richter and Ms. Lestrangle)





Goodbye to our Retirees

The following retirees were recognized at our May 14, 2024 Board of Education meeting with appreciation for their years of service to the students of the Readington Township School District. Please join Dr. Hart in wishing our retirees all the best in this next chapter of life.

Readington Middle School

Ms. Beth McGivney, Special Education Teacher
Ms. Spring Zuegner-LaFevre, English Language Arts Teacher

Holland Brook School

Mr. Paul Nigro, Principal
Ms. Cathy Patrick, Grade 5 Teacher
Ms. Kelly Patterson, Grade 4 Teacher
Ms. Deb Vasnelis, Clerical Aide

Three Bridges School

Ms. Annette Dambach, Paraprofessional
Ms. Sharon Nilsen, Intervention Teacher

Transportation

Ms. Ruby DeStefano, School Bus Driver
Ms. Linda Giorgianni, School Bus Driver
Ms. Linda Rad, School Bus Driver



Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- June 20 / Early Dismissal – Graduation
- June 21 / Early Dismissal – Last Day of School
- September 5 / First Day of School for Students

Upcoming BOE Meetings: July 23, and August 20, 2024



**“Good bye may seem forever. Farewell is like the end,
but in my heart is the memory and there you will always be.” – Disney**