



Flemington-Raritan School District

Parent & Community Newsletter

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PREPARING FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR

The District has been preparing for the 2022-2023 school year taking care of all the necessary steps that are required for a smooth opening of our schools. From infrastructure to interviews, school district planning has competing priorities. Flemington-Raritan hired over 100 new faculty and staff members, ordered materials for 3,100 students in preschool through grade eight, and designed schedules to provide students with access to the best curriculum.

This summer, the Human Resources Department processed the hiring of formerly outsourced teacher assistants to be official staff members of the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. Teacher assistants are staff members that work in classrooms to provide support for instruction, for small groups of students or individual students based on individual educational plans developed for students.

Fortunately, almost all of our teacher assistants who worked in our schools previously returned to the district. Teacher assistants were formerly employed by the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission out of Califon, New Jersey. Instead, these staff members are now official members of the Flemington-Raritan staff.

The switch to staffing our own positions is beneficial for many reasons. One reason is that employing our own teacher assistants provides these staff members with the opportunity to be present on all of our professional development days. These opportunities provide teacher assistants with training needed to support students and teachers, at no additional cost to the district.

In addition to onboarding our teacher assistants, the District also has focused a great deal of time and energy to fill open positions by hiring exceptional staff and faculty to be members of the Flemington Raritan School District. We hired numerous faculty and staff members; health and physical education teachers, math and language arts teachers, science teachers, music, special education, pre-school, band, and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. We also hired elementary and middle school teachers, guidance counselors, school

psychologists, school secretaries, Central Office administrative assistants and cafeteria aides.

Despite all of these hires, we still have a few positions that remain open as a result of staff shortages all around the state in education. Positions like world language, special education, and math and science teachers have been extremely difficult to fill. The district advertises frequently on many hiring platforms to recruit candidates.

Partly due to the exceptional reputation of the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District, almost all of our positions are filled with highly qualified candidates. Applications and resumes are ranked and reviewed by principals and members of the curriculum team. Members of school teams interview candidates for open positions and narrow the candidate pool to a final few candidates.

The final candidate is selected after a few candidates, usually two or three, teach a demonstration lesson which is rated by an interview team using highly exceptional teaching standards as a rating scale. Knowledge of curriculum standards and child pedagogy, as well as content knowledge and classroom management are all important skills candidates must demonstrate during a demonstration lesson.

After a reference check, a final candidate is recommended to the Superintendent. I meet with each candidate for a final interview and provide a recommendation to the Board of Education for their hiring. New hires are reviewed thoroughly and approved by the State of New Jersey. Candidates pass a rigorous background check, including fingerprint clearance and receive certification via the New Jersey State requirements.

Unfortunately, there have been times this summer when a candidate has been selected, interviewed, and recommended to the Superintendent, only to resign later after accepting another offer at a different school district. Sometimes it's a district closer to their home or a different grade level that they have their heart set on teaching. Other times candidates are offered a higher salary at a competing school district.

In July, the Board of Education agreed on a five-year contract with the Flemington-Raritan Education

Association which offers a salary percentage increase for Flemington-Raritan Schools' staff and teachers. The agreement has helped the district to retain our high-quality staff and recruit teachers from other school districts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Whew! It's been a busy summer just to staff our schools with full-time staff.

REFERENDUM UPDATE

Part of our District's summertime priorities are a result of the 2019 referendum passing. The district is grateful to the taxpayers for their support of the 2019 referendum which allowed the district to install heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) in all elementary schools to provide better air quality.

Our facilities and maintenance team has been working with contractors to check-off punch list items from the list of items that are still being completed. Items like fine-tuning heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning unit ventilators using sensors to gather circulation and airflow data, regulating thermostats, and reducing the noise level of unit ventilators.

Thermostats are being regulated for efficiency and comfort in all areas of buildings. Settings are designed for when rooms are unoccupied to be cost-effective, yet still keep humidity controlled. We know research shows that indoor environmental quality directly impacts student performance. Air quality, temperature, lighting, and design all play a role in how well students' perform.

The passing of the 2019 referendum afforded the district not only to install HVAC in buildings that did not formerly have air-conditioning, but install new windows at RFIS and other external design improvements.

Thank you, community members!

TEACHER TRAINING AND CURRICULUM UPDATES

During the summer our teachers are busy attending learning institutes, writing curriculum, and preparing their classrooms for the return of students on Tuesday, September 6. We reserved the first two days of September, the 1st and 2nd, for staff and faculty to gather together for two days of professional development.

In addition to the days planned at the beginning of September, new teachers that have been hired by the District are welcomed at a new faculty members' two-day faculty orientation. On these two days, new faculty members meet the Flemington-Raritan administrative team and participate in professional development. Part of the two-day training is held at school buildings to

provide new faculty members with time to work in their classrooms or offices and meet with colleagues.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Safety and security are top priorities in the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. During the month of June I pitched a safety and security plan to the Raritan Township Committee. To support the safety of students, faculty, and staff and protect the investment of the community members in Flemington-Raritan, the purpose was to advocate for extending the partnership between Raritan Township and Flemington Raritan Schools for the security of Class III Officers in all our schools.

Raritan Township Committee Members, School Liason, Robyn Fatooh and Mayor Gary Hazard were instrumental in the passing of a funding agreement whereas the Raritan Township Committee agreed to fund the cost of two additional officers at no cost to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District.

We are grateful to Raritan Township for their agreement to fully fund two additional Class III Officers beginning in September. We greatly appreciate the Raritan Township Committee's time, dedication, and effort in maintaining the importance of school security and their ongoing pledge to remain vigilant in keeping our children and community safe.

We are welcoming two new officers to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District team: Officer John Carney and Officer Ed Purcell. Our district has 6 six full-time officers:

- Officer Mike Fitzpatrick
- Officer Harry Hultz
- Officer Darren Powell
- Officer Craig Santoro
- Officer John Carney
- Officer Ed Purcell

As our partnership continues, I commend and applaud Raritan Township for continuing to collaborate with the Flemington-Raritan Schools to uphold school security as a community priority. We are grateful for their support in assigning two additional Class III Officers to our district which will provide all six of our district schools with equal protection and resources.

Partnership with law enforcement is a critical step toward preventing or thwarting potential threats to our schools; offering an immediate response to crises and emergencies; monitoring and assessing on-site situations in real-time; enabling schools to isolate and deescalate issues as they unfold; fostering a sense of comfort and reassurance in children, parents and employees; and

allowing teachers to focus on students' academic, social and emotional growth in a safe and secure learning environment.

DISTRICT CURRICULUM UPDATES

Every five years, the New Jersey Department of Education makes revisions to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Once approved by the State Board of Education, each district is required to update its curriculum documents to ensure that the "performance expectations" listed in the Standards are included in its curriculum guides. The Curriculum Department has several projects underway to comply with this requirement. Typically these projects are routine; however, the new Health Standards have become a source of controversy in a number of districts across the state.

There are three standards contained in the State's Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards and a total of 13 topics. The content is also divided into grade bands: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

2.1 Personal and Mental Health	2.2 Physical Wellness	2.3 Safety
Personal Growth & Development	Movement Skills and Concepts	Health Conditions, Diseases and Medicines
Pregnancy and Parenting	Physical Fitness	Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs
Emotional Health	Lifelong Fitness	Dependency, Substance Disorder, and Treatment
Social and Sexual Health	Nutrition	
Community Health Services and Support		

The most frequent concerns expressed focus on the "Social and Sexual Health" topic. The State requires public school districts to write curriculum to teach learning objectives specified by the State of New Jersey but does not require "how" topics are taught. According to information provided to school districts, "The 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards (SJSLS) in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE) were designed to address the needs of each student to gain knowledge and skills in caring for themselves, interacting effectively, respectfully and safely with others, and analyzing the impact of health choices."

A committee of teachers led by the Assistant Superintendent is currently reviewing our existing curriculum and the new standards. Curriculum that is developmentally- and age-appropriate will be developed

and selected through meaningful and ongoing consultation with the school community, including parents.

Once a revised draft is written and reviewed by the Board Curriculum Committee, it will be shared with our community and feedback will be collected. A final draft is anticipated in late November, which will then be presented to the Board for its consideration. Until Board approval is given, no changes will occur in what or how children are taught.

Please know that the District's goal is to make minimal changes to the existing curriculum, and that it is our belief that sensitive topics related to sexuality are best addressed by parents/guardians in the home. We ask for your patience as we work through this process, and we assure our families that additional information will be shared as progress is made.

The District recognizes and respects that some families prefer to have these conversations privately. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.7, any child whose parent or guardian presents to the school a signed statement that any part of instruction in health, family life education, or sex education is in conflict with his or her conscience or sincerely held moral or religious beliefs shall be excused from that portion of the course. Parents and guardians seeking to exercise this option should contact their local school principal directly.

FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT WEBSITE: AN EXCITING UPDATE IS IN PROGRESS

Our District website is 13 years old and it's time for a refresh! We have been working this summer to update the seven websites associated with our school district; the District website and each school's website. The upgrade to a new web site template helps our District meet requirements for our websites to be ADA compliant. That's short for Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design. ADA compliance means that all electronic information and technology must be accessible to those with disabilities. The Central Office



website is already updated and we are working on the new template for each school's website as well.

Visitors to the website will notice right away the transition to a new web site template. The upgraded template has new graphics, fonts, features and information that are accessible to all users on various platforms, including mobile devices.

We have been extra careful to plan the new template so that the website is easy to navigate and users are able to locate information. Check out our new website [here!](#)

STRATEGIC PLANNING IS COMING UP

On Friday, November 4, 2022 from 6 to 8 PM and Saturday, November 5, 2022 from 9 AM to 3 PM, the District will engage in Strategic Planning. During the process, the District will identify strengths and challenges, define a new five-year vision, set objectives and goals, and establish action steps. The Board of Education is using the New Jersey School Boards Association to lead the work. If you are interested in participating in this process to volunteer as a representative from our academic community by serving on the Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee, please email laura.bruhn@frsd.us with your interest.

SUPERINTENDENT TALK-A-LATTES

The Superintendent "Talk-a-Latte" Roundtable discussions for the 2022-2023 school year are being scheduled for every other month, beginning in October. Talk-a-Latte sessions will be held at each school in the District beginning at 6 p.m. and concluding around 7:30 p.m. At each Talk-a-Latte session, special guests are invited to share information. Watch for the September newsletter issue to see the dates and topics.

"Talk-a-Latte" Roundtable discussions are designed to be open-forum conversations with members of the community about issues that are on the minds of Flemington-Raritan residents. Discussion items evolve with the interests of the members of the group with a bit of time devoted to information I planned to share with those who attend. Refreshments are always available; usually coffee, tea and a delicious dessert provided by our food services provider, Maschio's Food Services.



TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Transportation services are provided to students through a partnership between Hunterdon Central Regional High School and the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. Transportation Committee members are made up of Hunterdon Central's Board of Education members and Flemington-Raritan Board of Education members. Members of both Boards of Education meet regularly to decide policies associated with transportation and review concerns brought to the committee's attention.

In Flemington-Raritan, the Board provides transportation to and from school for public school pupils less than remote from their school in grades K-8 who live more than 1.5 miles from the school they attend and those who must walk along a state highway, and identified roads in the community. You can read the full policy [here](#).

Just like with our regular education students, transportation is provided to our students with special needs also who attend school in an out-of-district placement approved by the Board of Education. The transportation of students with special needs to special education programs approved by the Board and located outside the State meet guidelines established by the New Jersey State Department of Education pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:27-2.2(c)1.

The District also provides transportation to our youngest learners, our pre-school students who have special needs who are below the age of five. Just like our older students, these young students are transported in vehicles equipped with safety belts. Some vehicles are especially designed with other child restraint systems, in accordance with applicable Federal and State regulations.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

August 25: Board of Education Meeting, 7 PM
Rescheduled from August 22

September 1: First Day for Teachers - In-Service Day

September 2: Second Day for Teachers - In-Service Day

September 5: School Closed - Labor Day

September 6: First Day for Students – Welcome Back!

September 15: Early Dismissal, Grades 7 & 8 only –
J.P. Case Back-to-School Night

September 21: Early Dismissal, Grades 5 & 6 only –
RFIS Back-to-School Night

September 26: School Closed - Rosh Hashanah

September 29: Early Dismissal, Pre-K-Grade 4 only –
Elementary Schools' Back-to-School Night

October 5: School Closed – Yom Kippur