



Flemington-Raritan School District Parent & Community Newsletter



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DECEMBER GREETINGS

During the holidays my family gathers together to enjoy many traditional holiday celebrations. We are fortunate to be able to celebrate holiday traditions passed down from one generation to the other. From young cousins to elderly grandparents, we all spend a morning together cutting, filling, and folding pasta dough to make homemade ravioli. Preparing ravioli is a tradition set in place by my husband's mother and her mother, an immigrant to the United States from Sicily in the early 1900s. It's a tradition I look forward to every December.

My ninety-two-year-old mother-in-law, in all her spice and glory, still directs each family member how to cut the dough, tuck in the filling, fold carefully, and place onto a cornmeal-lined baking sheet. Each family member on the assembly line takes a role: 1) cutting the dough into perfectly-sized squares; 2) filling the square with spinach and meatball mix; or 3) folding the rosette, a flower-shaped flour pocket, quickly, so the dough doesn't become too dry. The last member on the assembly line, usually the youngest member, places the rosette on the baking sheet. A family member that folds too slow or fills a ravioli with too much filling will hear Grandma Mercedes say, "Maybe you want to stir the sauce or use the spray bottle to moisten the dough." Her suggestions and traditions allow the littlest nieces, nephews, and grandchildren to all be involved.

The assembly line is a noisy, fun-filled time with laughter, love, and gentle ribbing about ravioli-folding techniques. It reminds me of the intent of the holidays; to enjoy family and friends and time together.

As we move into the holidays in December, please accept my warmest wishes for a terrific December and a happy, healthy holiday season.

SUPERINTENDENT ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

At the November 18 Superintendent's Roundtable at Copper Hill Elementary School, community members and parents met with the Superintendent for an up-close and personal conversation about hot topics. Participants had a discussion about the district's referendum, safety, and security, parking lots, ratings for bonds, the new Director of Special Education, the Hunterdon County Safety Summit, Class III Officers, and



student-led conferences. Following these topics, the session moved to an open-forum format with the following topics discussed:

√ Parents were interested in school security. We talked about the procedures in place for visitors in buildings and the security drills that happen regularly. Parents will notice new signs on all exterior doors on schools that direct visitors to not prop or hold the door open. Closing the door after you've entered is not to be rude to those behind you, but allows for procedures to be in place for each visitor to be electronically "buzzed in" to the building.

√ A parent, whose career is that of a civil engineer, shared technical expertise about types of asphalt in parking lots.

√ A conversation about student-led conferences and how to help children prepare for these without overstepping too much and leading the conference for the child. More information about student-led conferences can be found [here in a video](#) published from Edutopia and [here](#) from EL Education.

√ The group also talked about the amount of stress on students today and the Hunterdon County Stigma Task Force, a group that focuses on mental health awareness.

The Superintendent Roundtable sessions are an open forum for community discussion on topics that are on the minds of our community members. At the January Superintendent Roundtable Session, I am



hopeful to talk a bit about school security and STEM, otherwise known in the education world as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The session focuses on the interests of those in attendance, but I always have

a few topics of interest I am willing to share with those that attend. Dates alternate between school locations and evening and morning times to try to accommodate community

members' schedules. There are always special goodies to share that are provided just for the group from our District's food service vendor, Maschio's.

Check the district website [here](#) to register for January's Superintendent Roundtable Discussion. January's session will be held at Barley Sheaf Elementary School in the library on January 15th from 9:30 until 11 a.m. I hope to see many of you there!

WINTER IS HERE AND JACK FROST HAS ALREADY FLEXED HIS MUSCLES!

If this week is any indication of the winter weather we are to expect this winter, we could be headed into quite the wintry season! According to the Farmers' Almanac, the New Jersey Winter of 2019 is forecasted to be quite a doozy! See article [here](#) from the Patch website. Reporters shared that New Jersey will have a worse than usual winter. The Farmers' Almanac reports for New Jersey to have a cold snap that will hit during the last week of January 2020 and stretch into February. Authors of the Patch article further reported we will not have an early spring this year, but a cold and icy long winter.



Image credit is given to [News12.com](#)

While the Farmers' Almanac is a fun and interesting read, if you want to test your meteorological skills, check out the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration's Climate Prediction Center's website. They released their official thirty-day forecast [here](#) and [here](#).

The authors of the weather article in Country Living remind readers that weather predictions are just that—predictions—and that means that they are not going to be 100% accurate. As the writers say, take all this weather forecasting with a grain of salt—and make sure to stock up on gloves and hats just in case.



An Important Reminder:

We used one of our built in snow days for this calendar year on Monday, December 2. It will be recommended to the Board of Education to follow the previously-approved district calendar which designated contingency snow days. Four contingency snow days were built into the calendar and will be used to make up snow closing days in the following order: May 22, April 20, April 9, and March 9. If March 9 is used as a make-up day it will be an early dismissal day for students and an extended Professional Development Day for staff. If additional days are required, the following days will be reinstated: April 17, 16, 15, 14, and 13, respectively.

These days are aligned with spring break. This means that for every additional snow day needed one day will be subtracted from the spring break holiday. While family time is important we are hopeful our students are present at school as often as they are healthy. See the link for the calendar [here](#).

RFIS VETERAN'S DAY ASSEMBLY

Authored by Susan Sullivan, a faculty member at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School

Reading-Fleming Intermediate School held its annual veteran's assembly on Tuesday, November 26.

The assembly was designed to celebrate the service of veterans and to learn from their vast array



of life experiences. Jesse Lockett was the guest of honor this year. Mr. Lockett is the Vice Principal of the Flemington-Raritan School District's Copper Hill School and has served as a Staff Sergeant in the United States Air Force. Mr. Lockett was deployed to Iraq from May 2005 through April 2006, serving on a security forces team stationed at Camp Bucca in Southern Iraq. He provided ground transport of detainees from the TIF, which is a Theater Internment Facility, better known as a prison. He transported detainees from Camp Bucca to Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

Mr. Lockett takes great pride in his desire and ability to serve. He shared that the most rewarding part of his job in Iraq was when he was assigned to serve at the visitor's center of the prisons. He said that as an American he was perceived as the enemy occupying the Iraqi country and the people coming to see their loved ones were perceived as potential enemies to the mission. Instead, Mr. Lockett shared how he chose to see them not as enemies, but as humans. In the midst of a combat zone, which is ugly, he treated it as an opportunity to embrace that we are all human. We are all capable of love. No matter what country you call your home, we all have families whom we all love and cherish. Respect is something we all deserve. He admitted that sometimes people are prejudiced. He said he thought he knew Iraq and that the Iraqi's thought they knew America. He learned quickly that Iraq is made up of many

different backgrounds and beliefs, just like America is made up of more than Texas, California, and New York. Mr. Lockett said, "We must open our minds and see the bigger picture. It isn't just about us and our own personal experience."

Vice Principal, Jesse Lockett, shared with the RFIS 5th and 6th-grade student body that service is not just about being in the military. Service starts right here in your homes, your school, your community, and your houses of worship. He asked students what one way they think they can serve is. Students responded with being respectful, looking people in the eye when they speak, holding doors, and working together. He said that the military taught him to face his challenges and keep serving even when serving is hard. He encouraged students to do the same.

He spoke about that school was not always a great experience for him as a kid. He talked about how he went to school to talk and hang out with friends. This experience ended up shaping his time at a base in Missouri, where during his free time he took up mentoring middle school students from difficult life situations and helped them to see themselves in a new light. He also found ways to volunteer within the town, even dressing up as Santa Claus to help bring some holiday cheer to elementary school students. When asked by an RFIS student what his highest goal was, he answered with being a teacher. He said being a teacher means serving. He shared with students that teachers are here to help them grow socially and emotionally and that is what leads to their academic growth. Teachers are here to serve for you every day and he is grateful to not only be a teacher but also to have become a vice principal where he can continue to serve.

RFIS is grateful to the many veterans who have served our nation, those who serve in our school district, and to the many guests, we have had over the last 12 years of coordinating and holding the assembly. Student Council members led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the school community singing the national anthem. The assembly is run each year by RFIS Music Teacher, Susie Guckin-Sullivan, whose husband is a Gulf War Marine Corps Veteran.



**DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL
EDUCATION:
DR. DANIELLE HAMBLIN**

The Flemington-Raritan Board approved Dr. Danielle Hamblin of Education as our district's new Director of Pupil Services on

Tuesday evening, September 17. Dr. Hamblin was interviewed by the Superintendent's Director of Pupil Services Hiring Committee this past spring and received broad support. Dr. Hamblin accepted the position for Director after the resignation of the former Director of Pupil Services, Mr. Jeff Presley. Dr. Hamblin began her new role in our district on November 18, 2019.

Dr. Hamblin was the Director of Special Services in Sparta, New Jersey, since 2015. Previous to Sparta, she served for five years in Randolph, New Jersey, as a K-5 principal initially, and was promoted to the Director of Special Services. Prior, Dr. Hamblin was a K-5 elementary principal in Great Meadows, New Jersey, and had also held the positions of Assistant Principal and Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction in Hope, NJ. Dr. Hamblin was a K-8 teacher for 10 years in Hunterdon County before beginning her administrative experience. Dr. Hamblin was awarded Teacher of the Year in 1996 and received an award of excellence for her Doctoral Dissertation on the implementation of a formalized rounding model within a Department of Special Education.

Dr. Hamblin received her Doctorate in Education with a concentration in Special Education from Caldwell College and her Educational Leadership from Fairleigh Dickinson. She has a Masters in the Art of Teaching from Marygrove College and an Early Childhood Education degree from Elizabethtown College. Dr. Hamblin lives in Warren County, New Jersey, with her husband Loren, two children Colin and Kyle, and dogs Riley and Madeline. She grew up in Whitehouse Station and attended Hunterdon Central High School. She recently attended her 30th high school reunion!

The District is pleased to welcome Dr. Danielle Hamblin to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District.

SAFETY AND SECURITY OF STAFF, STUDENTS, FACULTY AND FACILITIES

Student and staff safety continues to be a top priority for the District. The District has two district safety specialists, Mr. Peter Sibia, Vice Principal at J.P. Case Middle School, and Mr. Jesse Lockett, Vice Principal at Copper Hill Elementary School. Both faculty members attend specialized training to hold the title of District Safety Specialists. Mr. Sibia and Mr. Lockett both serve as chairpersons on the District Security Committee and assist the Superintendent in decision making on safety and security in the District.

The District has four other people that are instrumental in the safety and security of our staff, faculty, students, and facilities; Officer Harry, Officer Mike, and Officer Craig. All three are Class III officers, retired police officers that serve in our schools to provide safety and security to staff, students, and building security. Additionally, Mr. Jim Shumate, Director of Buildings and Grounds, serves as the district's Director of

Operations & Security. The team is notified any time there are issues that are of concern regarding safety and security.

The Board of Education welcomes visits to schools by parents or legal guardians, other adult residents of the community, and interested educators. District Policy 9150, School Visitors, states that " for the educational program to continue undisturbed when visitors are present, and to prevent the intrusion of disruptive persons into the schools, the Board directs the enforcement of rules governing school visits."

All parents and visitors to our Flemington-Raritan Regional School District will notice on all exterior doors of facilities new signs directing visitors to report to the main office and not to hold or prop the door open.



These signs are posted to remind visitors that procedures must be followed to request access to a building. Please, in the effort of safety and security of students, staff, and faculty, do not hold the door open for others to enter if you have been granted access to the building. It is extremely important that each individual request access and that access be granted by the main office. This may seem rude at first when actually it is the best procedure to follow.

If you have a question about safety and security in your child's school please reach out to your building principal. The building principal can answer specifics that may come to your attention via online blogs or news reports. If there are district-wide safety and security messages such as security drills, power outages, or other crises that require district-wide communication, those messages and alerts will come from the Superintendent's office.

REFERENDUM UPDATE



The passing of the bond referendum authorizes the selling of bonds to raise funds for the school projects outlined explicitly in the referendum projects. The bond debt is paid off by the taxpayers over twenty years. You can find online news reports about the referendum passing [here](#) and [here](#).

In consultation with bond counselors, the Board adopted the authorizing of the bond resolution at its November 25, 2019 meeting, and we scheduled the sale of the bond the week of December 9. We are working towards the bonds sold and closed before the end of the calendar year to ensure the District receives its debt service aid quickly.

As your superintendent, our schools are the focal point of my conversations with our community. I am working hard to continue to forge positive relationships with the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District community. I will be keeping our community informed through additional updates, pictures, written communication, and drone aerial footage of the projects taking place.

HOLIDAY FUN FAIR & BASKET AUCTION



The Holiday Fun Fair and Basket Auction will be held at J.P. Case Middle School from 5:30 until 9:00 p.m. on December 13, 2019. Proceeds from the event will be used to provide educational resources from teachers and students from the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. There will be fantastic baskets, holiday entertainment, a holiday shop for kids, free activities, storytime with teachers, and concessions available.

Last year I donated a "Call the Snow Day" holiday basket. This basket was won by Emily, a Barley Sheaf Elementary School student. Parents and students will surely remember last winter season Emily's adorable voice letting everyone know that due to weather the district would be closed or have a delayed opening.



I look forward to randomly selecting this year's lucky winner at Friday night's Holiday Fun Fair and Basket Auction! While we hope for a mild winter and school to be open at its regularly scheduled time and day, hearing a child's voice announce the closing or delay makes so many of us smile. Good luck to all that enter!

