



Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parent and Community Newsletter



December, 2021 Edition 5

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DECEMBER GREETINGS

During the 2020 holiday season many families, friends, and loved ones had limited gatherings together to celebrate the holiday. Joyously, the 2021 holiday season is bringing many families and loved ones back together under one roof for celebration. The COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters have provided many with the physical and mental safety net they needed to feel comfortable gathering again.

In my family, we are fortunate to be able to celebrate holiday traditions passed down from one generation to the other. From young cousins to elderly grandparents, family members spend one morning together cutting, filling, and folding pasta dough to make homemade ravioli; a tradition set in place by my husband's mother and her mother, an immigrant to the United States from Sicily in the early 1900's. We are blessed that my ninety-four-year-old mother-in-law, Grandma Mercedes, still places herself at the head of the folding table, often providing rosette folding tips to the younger members of the family.

The seating at our holiday table continues to grow each year with younger cousins growing up and bringing spouses and new babies seated in high chairs adorning a spot at the center of the kid's table; a blessing we are fortunate to be thankful for every year.

As we move into the holidays in December please accept my warmest wishes for a terrific December and a happy and healthy holiday season with your families, friends, and loved ones. May your holiday tables overflow with a bountiful harvest and provide a space for your loved ones to come together to celebrate the season. Happy holidays!

An Important Reminder:

We have three built in snow days for this calendar year. The district may not switch from a snow day to a virtual instruction day until after the third day of consecutive school closings. According to the State of New Jersey Department of Education Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Programs, a virtual instruction day will be implemented during a district closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. **Parents should be prepared for a traditional snow day if the weather necessitates a school closing.**

ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

(Co-authored by Mr. Dan Bland, Assistant Superintendent)

At the November 22 Board of Education meeting Mr. Bland, the Assistant Superintendent, shared information with those in attendance and our Board of Education Members about our district enrollment and the residential construction in our Raritan and Flemington Borough area. The full presentation can be found [here](#) on our District homepage under Board of Education presentations. The District recognizes the complexity of the research that Mr. Bland dedicated to this task and formally thanks him for all his efforts to inform our community and the Board of Education.

We have six new residential properties scheduled for completion in the 2021-2022 school year; The Enclave, Willows II (South), Altra/Cain, Raritan Town Square, Agway, and the Union Hotel.



The Enclave is an approved 200 unit apartment building near HealthQuest. It is one four-story building in the Francis A. Desmares Elementary School community. Site work is currently underway and unlikely to be occupied by June 2022. We expect 8-14 students to enroll as a result of the completion of the housing unit.

Willows II (South) is a complex with 100 units with nine buildings. There are 1, 2, and 3 bedroom apartments with framing and sheathing currently in progress. A date of occupancy is unknown at this time. Based on previous enrollment from Willows I, we expect Willows II (South) to house an additional 48-52 students upon completion. This building currently falls in the catchment area for Francis A. Desmares Elementary School.

The Raritan Town Square apartment complex has two buildings and is located near PetSmart. One building was completed last summer, and students were enrolled at Barley Sheaf rather than Francis A. Desmares to ease overcrowding. The other buildings is anticipated to be completed in February 2022 bringing the total to 140 units from which we anticipate another 18-22 students who will attend Barley Sheaf Elementary.

Hunterdon Creekside constructed fifty non-age restricted condos located on two new streets: Altra Court and Cain Court. Altra Court is fully occupied, and Cain Court is anticipated to be occupied by January 2023. We only anticipate 4-6 additional students from these homes - all of whom will attend Barley Sheaf.

Also planned are residential apartments on the site of the Agway Property on Main Street in Flemington. Current plans are for two buildings with a total of 100 one and two bedroom apartments. The start date for construction is not known at this time, and we are still developing student enrollment projections for this construction.

Additionally, the Courthouse Square, formerly the historical Union Hotel, has a total of 206 units planned with studio units, one and two-bedroom units and two-bedroom duplexes. Five percent, or 14 units are designated as affordable housing. A completion date is not known but is not likely before 2023.

Most recently, local news sources reported that consideration is being given to replacing the Liberty Village stores with new residential properties. At this time, we are closely monitoring the development of this property. Flemington Borough Council reviewed proposed plans for “diverse housing opportunities” for both multi-family and/or townhouse units. [Central Jersey reported](#) that the plan recommended 15% of the rental units be affordable housing with 20% of the for-sale units be affordable housing as well.

Given the projected enrollments from new residential construction, Francis A. Desmares is anticipated to increase enrollment by 56-66 students, and Barley Sheaf is anticipated to increase enrollment by 22-28 students. Given the capacity of our schools, the challenge we face is how to accommodate the increase in enrollment given the scarcity of space, particularly at Francis A. Desmares.

Elem School	Development	Minimum	Maximum
BS	Raritan Town Square	18	22
FAD	Willows South	48	52
FAD	The Enclave	8	14
BS	Cain Court	4	6
	Totals	78	94
	K-4	43.3	52.2
	5-8	34.7	41.8

With all four new residential complexes being located in the northern half of the District, we are anticipating a total

increase of 78-94 new students, with the largest projected impact being felt at Francis A. Desmares School.

In July of 2019 the District received a proposal for a statistical demographic services with Dr. Richard S. Grip. At the March 9, 2020 Board of Education meeting, Dr. Richard Grip reported the results of the District demography study. Statistical Forecasting completed the demographic study for our District, projecting grade-by-grade enrollments from 2020-21 through 2024-25, a five-year period.

The following information was gleaned from the report:

- Community population trends and age structure, fertility rates, and birth counts,
- Historical enrollment trends, both districtwide and by grade configuration (Pre-K-4, 5-6, and 7-8),
- Historical enrollment trends with respect to race and poverty status in each school and districtwide,
- Student yields by housing type (e.g., detached single-family, townhouse/condominium, and apartment),
- Research on new housing starts and the projected impact on the school district, and
- Projected enrollments, in a totally independent analysis, based on student yields and housing turnover rates (resales) in Flemington Borough and Raritan Township.

Members of the public can find the demographer's March 2020 presentation on the district website, [here](#). We continue to make every effort to ensure program consistency, enrollment balance, and funding equity in staffing amongst our schools.

The changing nature of our community makes the goal of stability in one building throughout a student's K-4 education a challenge. The changing nature of our community is causing the District to reexamine the elementary catchment areas. While we know most current K-4 parents and students would prefer to remain in their current school until the completion of grade 4, we also must avoid over-crowding. Over-crowding can necessitate increasing class sizes and making changes to our academic programs if there is inadequate space to implement them.

As per Board of Education policy, the District makes every effort to reassign children only once during their elementary school years. We recognize that the possibility of changing elementary schools can create worry over the anticipation of attending a new school. In the upcoming months the district will include a multitude of activities to ease the worry including but not limited to the following:

- Providing school and district newsletter information in the months preceding any redistricting;
- Host parent “question and answer” programs;
- Assign small groups of redistricted students to the same new homerooms the upcoming fall;
- Involve staff from both schools in the placement of students
- Discussion at Superintendent Talk-a-Latte Events
- Continued development of solutions through the Superintendent's Equity Ad Hoc Committee.



WINTER IS ON ITS WAY! LET'S BE PREPARED!

Schools may be closed or have a delayed opening due to inclement weather or other emergencies. The district will contact families using an automated voice messaging service. Notification will be posted online at www.frsd.k12.nj.us. School closing information can also be found on our social media pages on Twitter @FlemRarSchools and #frsd, on Facebook under Flemington Raritan School District, & on Instagram as flemington_raritan_schools.

In the event of inclement weather or other circumstances that would cause the closing of schools, a delayed opening, or an early school closing, communication with staff and families occurs in multiple and redundant ways. Families and staff members receive notification via phone, email, and text using our School Messenger system. Please make sure your child's school has up-to-date contact information. The District posts delay, early dismissal, or closing information on the district website and our local Flemington-Raritan police are also notified of the district's plan.

On days when inclement weather is predicted, the decision to close school may be made the evening prior. If not, the decision-making process begins at 4:30 a.m. and includes research on weather conditions, assessment of site conditions for our schools, consultation with the township police, and a conference e-mail with regional superintendents of schools. A decision will be made by approximately 5:30 a.m. and the communication process will be initiated.

Some important information: A "delay" means a 90-minute delay for students and staff. Students report to their bus stops or arrive at school 90 minutes after normal time. When a "delay" is called, please continue to be alert for communications, as a "delay" can evolve into a "school closing." For "early dismissals," kindergarten through grade four are dismissed at 1:20 p.m., Grades 5 and 6 are dismissed at 12:40 p.m., and J.P. Case is dismissed at 12:44 p.m.

If schools are closed, facilities are not available for use for after-school or evening activities by internal or external organizations; therefore, all after-school activities are canceled. The YMCA after-care program is cancelled when schools are closed due to inclement weather. If schools are closed or there is an early dismissal on a Friday, please check the district website for the status of weekend activities.

SUPERINTENDENT RIDES THE BUS



During the month of November I rode an afternoon Copper Hill bus, #718 in fact, with bus driver Ms. Ladd. As we gathered outside Copper Hill waiting to board the bus, a fourth-grader, who serves as a school patrol officer on the bus, greeted students entering the bus.

Once we were on board and seated Ms. Ladd and the students on bus #718 taught me to sing their "buckle up your seatbelt song." I quickly caught on to the catchy tune and was singing alongside the second grader I sat next to on the bus.

Shortly after we were buckled up and on our way I learned about the make-believe game students and Ms. Ladd play while riding the bus home. A few second grade students shared with me that they are learning about place value and the pilgrim life. Another student in first grade shared with me about his new friends in first grade and how much he loves being in school.

We are fortunate to have bus drivers that create a calm and safe environment on our school buses. The relaxing atmosphere seemed to put our students at ease and they merrily sang the seatbelt song and chanted about make-believe animals. The role of our bus drivers is ensuring the safety of children to and from school-related activities. Student safety is the top priority of all of our bus drivers.

The positive attitude and safe environment on the school bus made learning the safety rules of seatbelts a natural part of riding the bus. Thank you, Ms. Ladd, for your service to our students.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: CALL TO SERVE



The District is forming a Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee. Strategic Planning is a process by which school districts identify strengths and challenges, define a vision, set objectives and goals, and establish action steps.

After a review of two proposals, the Board of Education selected the New Jersey Schools Boards Association to support the work of the strategic planning process. As part of the process, the District will engage employees, residents, and volunteer representatives of our community in the process through committee work.

If are interested in serving on the Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee, please email lbruhn@frsd.k12.nj.us with your contact information. We are scheduled to meet on Friday, January 28th from 6 to 8:30 PM (dinner will be served) and

again the next day on Saturday, January 29th from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM. A continental breakfast and lunch will be served on Saturday. In case of school closure due to inclement weather on January 28th or January 29th, we have reserved snow dates of February 4 and February 5 at the same times.

REFERENDUM UPDATE

Work continues throughout the District toward completion of referendum upgrades. You may have noticed on the perimeter of the entrances and exits

to each school a metal pole with solar panels on the top. The Eastern DataComm Lens system also includes emergency strobe lights that are installed on metal poles at the entrances off the main road turning onto the school property, alerting for



example the school bus drivers and parents not to turn into the school property because an emergency is taking place. Also installed as part of the DataComm system are horns at the back of ballfields that are set back on the school property so that the students and staff can hear any emergency announcements taking place.

If you are making your way onto any campus and notice the strobes are active on top of the metal poles that is a signal not to enter the campus because of an active emergency.

Watch for more information from your child’s school principal on upcoming drills and safety announcements.



**SUPERINTENDENT
ROUNDTABLE
TALK-A-LATTE CHATS**

Date	Time	Location
August 31	6-7:30 p.m.	J.P. Case Cafeteria
October 12	6-7:30 p.m.	Barley Sheaf Cafeteria
December 1	6-7:30 p.m.	Reading-Fleming Cafeteria
February 2	6-7:30 p.m.	Robert Hunter Cafeteria
April 7	6-7:30 p.m.	Desmares Cafeteria
May 31	6-7:30 p.m.	Copper Hill Cafeteria

*To support our families whose native language is not English, translators will be provided at meetings that are scheduled for Robert Hunter Elementary and Francis A. Desmares Elementary Schools.

The second meeting was held on October 12 at Barley Sheaf Elementary School. Ten parents and community members talked together about a host of topics including:

- COVID-19 pandemic and virtual instruction
- Mirimus testing for mandatory weekly negative testing as required by New Jersey Executive Order
- A question and answer about weekly testing was facilitated by a Mirimus representative
- Equity action plans; year one initiatives.

DATES TO REMEMBER

The District website has a monthly calendar for important school happenings. See the link [here](#) for the yearly calendar of school events.



- K-8 students are on an early dismissal for parent conferences on December 1, 2, and 3.
- Report cards are released on Friday, December 17.
- Our district has an early dismissal for the winter recess on Thursday, December 23.
- Students return on Monday, January 3, 2022.



**JANUARY IS BOARD OF EDUCATION
RECOGNITION MONTH**

January is School Board Recognition Month. We will have our reorganization meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 2022. Our Flemington-Raritan Regional School Board members are elected by the community and represent the public’s voice in public education. This voluntary post requires a significant time commitment. In addition to our monthly board and committee meetings, there are county meetings and mandated training sessions for school board members.

At the re-organization meeting of the Board of Education on January 5th, we will welcome newly elected Raritan Township resident Ms. Michelle Hurley and Flemington Borough resident, Ms. Loretta Borowsky.

We thank all our Flemington-Raritan Regional School Board members for their service. Thank you for your previous service to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District: Jessica Abbott, Pamela Baker, Tim Bart, Valerie Bart, Jeff Cain, Laurie Markowski, Susan Mitcheltree, Melanie Rosengarden, and Murty Varanasi.