



# Flemington-Raritan School District Parent Newsletter



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## JANUARY GREETINGS

Hello, parents, families, and community members! I hope that the winter break allowed time for our students to be with families and friends, enjoying food and festivities.

With my daughter home from James Madison University our family was back together for the winter break. We were able to enjoy a week of baking, fires in the fireplace, and even a friendly game of Family Laser Tag!

As we come to the end of January a few reminders about upcoming dates:

- January 15 Superintendent's Roundtable – Registration is open. The session will be held from 9:30-11 a.m., at Robert Hunter School. [Click here to register for the January 15 session!](#)
- Monday, January 21, all schools will be closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
- Tuesday, January 29, is an early dismissal day for students and a Staff Development Day for all staff.
- Friday, February 15, is a full Staff Development Day. Schools are closed for students.
- Monday, February 18, all schools will be closed for President's Day.



## EMERGENCY CLOSING/DELAYED OPENING PROCEDURES

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 SchoolMessenger 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.



## NEW JERSEY COURTS BOYCOTT PARCC REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

In the November newsletter I shared with staff members that Governor Phil Murphy declared that the statewide assessments for ELA and mathematics will be called: *New Jersey Student Learning Assessment- ELA (NJSLA-ELA)* and *New Jersey Student Learning Assessment-Mathematics (NJSLA-M)*. We were notified of changes in the number of test questions and the time allotment for particular units. The specifics are listed in the November newsletter.

More PARCC information was decided on December 31, 2018 from the Superior Court of New Jersey Appellate Division. The Education Law Center (ELC), Latino Action Network (LAN), Latino Coalition of New Jersey, Paterson Education Fund, and NAACP New Jersey State Conference, challenged the amendments to N.J.A.C. 6A:8, proposed by the Department of Education and adopted by the State Board of Education. In January, 2016 a final report concluded that the PARCC tests offered a way to show that students mastered course content, ultimately replacing the High School

Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). The commission recommended to the state that all public students in grades three through twelve take the PARCC end-of-course tests for every course in which they were enrolled. Furthermore, the class of 2020 (this year's ninth graders) were required to take the PARCC end-of-course assessments in which they are enrolled, but didn't have to achieve a prescribed score, before they could access alternative assessments for high school graduation (i.e., a portfolio assessment.) The commission amended this ruling stating that all students must demonstrate proficiency in the high school end-of-course PARCC assessments in ELA 10 and Algebra 1, or through alternative means in order to graduate. This was ruled for the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 graduating classes. There were alternative ways students could still meet graduation requirements such as passing a substitute competency test or passing another relevant end-of-course PARCC test, or meeting the criteria of a portfolio appeals process. The most noteworthy ruling, the one that really riled many educators and policy makers was that students in the 2020 graduating class must "take all applicable high school end-of-course PARCC assessments for all courses in which they are enrolled, but if they do not pass both the ELA 10 and Algebra I assessments, they may also demonstrate graduation proficiency through one of the alternative options available in prior years. N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(f) (2). Beginning with the 2021 graduating class, students must take all applicable end-of-course PARCC assessments for all courses in which they enroll. N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(g). A student who does not pass the ELA 10 and Algebra I exams by the end of his or her senior year after multiple opportunities to take [them], may satisfy the 9 A-0768-16T4 graduation requirements only through the portfolio appeals process; no substitute competency tests are available." See more information [here](#) about the New Jersey Appellate Division's decision.



**JANUARY IS BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOGNITION MONTH**

January is School Board Recognition Month. 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 7th, we welcomed new Board of Education member Valerie Bart. We thank all our Flemington-Raritan Regional School Board members for their service to our schools: Tim Bart (President), Jessica Abbot (Vice President), Valerie Bart, Sandra Borucki, Dr. Dennis Copeland, Dr. Marianne Kenny, Laurie Markowski, Susan Mitcheltree and Christopher Walker.



**DIRECTOR OF PUPIL SERVICES HIRING COMMITTEE**

The Director of Pupil Personnel Services Hiring Committee has 15 members, including the Superintendent. Committee members will recommend to the Superintendent a permanent Director of Pupil Personnel Services. Committee members include:

- Maria Yurecko, LDTC, Copper Hill and Robert Hunter;
- Ellen Goodfellow, Guidance Counselor, Copper Hill;
- Courtney Moscowitz, Child Study Team Member, RFIS;
- Chris Grabowich, Administrative Secretary, Special Services;
- Beth Brennan, School Psychologist, RFIS;
- Kelliann Tenkate, Supervisor of Special Education;
- Kelly Ann Hoff, Speech-Language Pathologist, Copper Hill;
- Noreen Bradley, Nurse, J.P. Case;
- Kristen Gonzales, Autism Teacher, Copper Hill;
- Karen Gabruk, Principal, Barley Sheaf;
- Colleen Weingarten, parent representing Copper Hill;
- Tricia Giordano, parent representing Robert Hunter;
- Mindy Pacholick, Behavioral Disabilities Teacher, J.P. Case;
- Susan Vala, Computer Teacher, RFIS, and Flemington-Raritan Education Association President.

I will keep our community up-to-date on decisions that are made about this important leadership position in our district.



**SATURDAY SESSIONS AT PRINCETON PLASMA PHYSICS LABORATORY**

In the winter I make it a point to attend the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory Science Saturday Sessions at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory in Princeton, New Jersey at 100 Stellarator Road. The Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory holds free Saturday sessions each Saturday in January, February and March. The Saturday science sessions are a free series of talks geared toward high school students, but open to all. Two years ago, at my first visit I sat between my seventh grade son and my fourth grade daughter at the kickoff Saturday session while we listened to Dr. Egemen Koleman, an astrophysicist from Princeton University. Dr. Koleman spoke about plasma control for energy. *Did we understand everything he was talking about? No. Were my children exposed to vocabulary they don't usually hear in my house? Yes, absolutely.*

Last year we attended a session by Professor Jeff Schneider, a research professor at the Robotics Institute School of

Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. He spoke about self-driving cars and how they are transforming our cities and lives. If you've heard anything about self-driving cars you know that they have become one of the hottest areas in tech development and "are poised to transform our transportation system." Professor Schneider told audience members that self-driving cars were one of the most complex technology developments ever undertaken and are simply not possible without artificial intelligence. Professor Schneider gave a brief history of autonomous vehicle progress, and described how machine learning and artificial intelligence solve various parts of the problem. He ended with ways in which self-driving cars will disrupt and change the transportation industry, our urban cities, and ultimately our lives.

This year my family is hopeful to make it to at least one of the sessions listed below. I highly recommend the trip over to Princeton to spend a Saturday morning talking with leading scientists about science.

**Saturday Science Session Topics**

- January 19—The Magnetic Universe
  - January 26—Osteoarthritis of the Hip and Knee: The Science Behind the Pain, and How New Research is Revolutionizing Treatment
  - February 2—New Jersey's Changing Climate
  - February 9—Planetary Science at the Coldest Place on Earth; The Antarctic Search for Meteorites
  - February 16—Magnetic Explosions: From Space Plasmas to Fusion Energy
  - February 22—NJ Regional Middle School Science Bowl
  - February 23—NJ Regional High School Science Bowl
  - March 2—Managing Coastal Risk in an Age of Sea-level Rise
- For more information visit <http://www.pppj.gov/>.



**FRSD staff to present at Techspo'19**

J.P. Case Middle School Principal Bob Castellano, Vice Principal April Kay and Technology Integration Specialist Jason Borawski are presenting at Techspo'19! The presentation will be held on January 31, 2019 at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City as part of the annual technology education exhibition and conference. Their presentation is titled, "*Enhancing your community, culture, and productivity with technology.*" For more information, check out the Techspo'19 website - <https://www.njasa.net/domain/191>. Way to go, J.P. Case Tigers!



**ANNOUNCEMENT OF EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR HONOREES**

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is fortunate to have a sterling teaching staff in all of its schools. The district and New Jersey Department of Education participate in the New Jersey Teacher of the Year Program and the Governor's Teacher/Educational Services Professional Recognition Program. This program highlights educational innovation, student achievement, the rewards of teaching and important services outside the classroom environment that lead to student success. Further, it seeks to attract public attention to the positive aspects of our educational system.

The school district has engaged in a process that allows for one teacher from each school, one educational support professional and one paraprofessional to be honored for outstanding professionalism and student support. We are happy to honor the following staff members with supportive comments from their colleagues and our Educator of the Year Committees.



**Barley Sheaf School**

**Teacher – Kathleen Mikalsen, Kindergarten**

Kathy Mikalsen is a dedicated kindergarten teacher who works endlessly to support all of her students and the school community. Her hard work and dedication to Barley Sheaf School and the Flemington-Raritan School District is an inspiration to others.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Gina Collins, School Counselor**

Gina Collins strives to serve every member of the Barley Sheaf community as the school counselor. She watches over our children, making time to discuss both big and small issues that arise in their daily lives.



**Copper Hill School**

**Teacher – Margaret Gerlach, Grade 2**

Margaret Gerlach is an outstanding leader on her grade level team. She has helped implement several key

initiatives, including our science curriculum, Foundations and exploring the upcoming workshop model for reading and writing.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Mary Genovese, Speech**

Copper Hill Elementary School is very proud to announce that Speech-Language Specialist Mary Genovese has been named as our Educational Services Professional of the Year. Ms. Genovese has been an educator for 34 years, 19 years in her current position at Copper Hill Elementary School.



**Francis A. Desmares School**

**Teacher – Nydia Peake, World Language**

Mrs. Nydia Peake is currently the World Language Teacher at Desmares School and Robert Hunter School. Prior to working in Flemington, Mrs. Peake was a World Language Teacher in Hampton Public Schools and Middlesex School District in New Jersey and Daisy Ingraham Elementary School in Connecticut. She also taught Language Arts and Social Studies in the Middlesex School District.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Kathleen Barbee, School Nurse**

Mrs. Kathleen Barbee has been the school nurse at Desmares School since 2014. Prior to working at Desmares School, she was a school nurse for several years at Bloomsbury Elementary School and a maternity nurse in Philadelphia and at Hunterdon Medical Center.



**Robert Hunter School**

**Teacher –Lori Carlucci, Grade 2**

Lori Carlucci has been named Robert Hunter’s Teacher of the Year. Lori is a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade teacher and a dedicated educator who works tirelessly to support her students’ needs. She values every child in her classroom as a unique learner, and she is a leader of differentiation strategies. She wants every child to succeed and advocates for each student in her classroom, collaborating with families and colleagues and always trying out new ideas.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Rebecca Burns, Stretch**

Rebecca Burns has been named Robert Hunter’s Educational Services Professional of the Year. In her roles as Stretch teacher and RTI specialist, Rebecca goes above and beyond to support students and staff at Robert Hunter. Rebecca has also taught in the district as a Language Arts teacher and Special

Education teacher and has gained a reputation as a learning strategies expert.



**Reading-Fleming Intermediate School**

**Teacher – Kristin DeLorenzo, Math Support**

Kristin DeLorenzo has been named the 2018-2019 Teacher of the Year for Reading-Fleming Intermediate School (RFIS). Kristin is well known for consistently pushing students to raise their level of performance in the classroom and to have a deep real-world understanding of the mathematical concepts.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Isabel Esparza, Teacher Assistant**

Isabel Esparza has been named the 2018-2019 Educational Services Professional of the Year for Reading-Fleming Intermediate School (RFIS). Isabel goes above and beyond to make sure all students experience success at RFIS. She truly puts children first and cares deeply for their well-being and academic success.



**J.P. Case Middle School**

**Teacher - Therese Squicciarini, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Learning-Language Disabilities Teacher**

J.P. Case is pleased to announce its Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Therese Squicciarini. Therese has worked in many capacities to serve the J.P. Case Middle School children. She began working as a Teaching Assistant, supporting instruction in a myriad of classes.

**Educational Services Professional –**

**Colette Baills, Guidance Counselor**

It is J.P. Case's pleasure to recognize Ms. Colette Baills as the Educational Services Professional of the year for 2018-19.

Ms. Baills is a trusted counselor who works tirelessly to serve and meet the needs of our adolescent students in all capacities each day. She garners resources for families in need, helps students and families through adversity, and brings a laser focus to her work while keeping current with mental health and wellness issues affecting our kids.