

Flemington-Raritan School District Parent Newsletter



March, 2019 Edition 7

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MARCH GREETINGS

March's weather has come in like a lion! The first weekend in March brought the Hunterdon area snow forecasts that threatened 6-9 inches of snow! It has been blustery cold! These conditions are favorable for continuing to stay inside where it's warm and cozy. The kindergarten students in a class at Barley Sheaf Elementary School shared their favorite activities on a snowy day.



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As a reminder about the process for a delay of opening of schools or a school closing I include part of January's newsletter. "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." I am hopeful with the forecast of slightly warmer weather this weekend we have seen the last of our cold, snowy forecasts.

This winter's phone message for the delay of school and school closing featured a delightful young lady's voice; a student named Emily who attends Barley Sheaf Elementary School. Emily's family won the basket raffle that was sponsored by the Flemington Raritan Education Foundation's Holiday fundraiser on December 19, 2018. This event raised close to seven thousand dollars to support teaching and learning in the district.



As we begin the month of March, here are a few reminders about upcoming dates:

- Monday, March 11- Early Dismissal Day for students and an extended professional development day for staff
- Wednesday, March 13- Superintendent Roundtable at RFIS, 9-10:30 a.m. You can register [here](#).
- Monday, March 18- RFIS and JPC Trimester #2 ends & Board meeting at JPC Middle School at 7 p.m.

DISTRICT CALENDAR UPDATES



Unfortunately the district had to use all three of the built-in snow days for this calendar year; two in September and one on Friday, November 16. It was recommended to the Board of Education to follow the previously approved district calendar which designated three contingency snow days. These snow days were built into the calendar. If more than three days were needed, the year was to be extended as follows: 4/26; 4/25; 4/24; 4/23; and 4/22. These days are aligned with Spring Break. This means that for every additional snow day needed one day was to be subtracted from the Spring Break recess. This means that Friday, April 26 [4/26] and Thursday, April 25 [4/25] are both school days. A few parents e-mailed me after the last snow storm to offer their opinions and ideas about the upcoming school year calendar for 2019-2020. Flemington-Raritan Regional School District tries to align with Hunterdon Central's school calendar as closely as possible. We want to make sure that siblings have the same winter break and spring break. We also talk together about beginning of the year and end of the year dates. We don't always match exactly but we try to come as close as possible. These days will be early dismissal days. While family time is important we are hopeful our students are present at school as often as they are healthy. Attached is the updated school calendar for the 2018-2019 school year.



SURVEY FOR PARENTS

The district seeks input from parents about our schools and the education of our students. It is the intent of the Board of Education and the Superintendent to continuously improve student achievement and to continuously improve the working environment and professional opportunities provided to the staff. At the link below is the 2019-2020 school district climate survey. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey and provide your comments and suggestions. Last year the school survey provided input on homework, the culture in our buildings, student learning, and more. The New Jersey Department of Education supports school surveys. According to the Department of Education many districts have been using school surveys to reinforce positive conditions and address vulnerabilities for learning. The district provides a link for an electronic version, as well as a paper version. Paper versions of the survey can be downloaded and printed out from the link or picked up at each school's front office. Surveys can be returned to the district office located at 50 Court Street,

Flemington, New Jersey or to any school's front office. Your feedback is important to us! Please click to complete the 2018-2019 School Climate Survey. Responses will be collected through April 1. [Reference Board of Education Policy 9128-Climate Surveys](#)
[Parent Survey – Online Format](#)
[Parent Survey – PDF file for printing](#)

SUPERINTENDENT'S LUNCH BUNCH

I had the pleasure of having lunch with a group of students from Francis A. Desmares during February. We talked about their favorite movies, places they had visited with their families, the snowy weather and the power outage at FAD. We even talked what books students were reading. Students shared that they loved their school and their teachers. I look forward to my next lunch bunch scheduled to take place this month at Robert Hunter Elementary on March 21, 2019. Students are invited to attend by school administration and guidance counselors.



CALL TO COMMITTEE

Board policy states, "The success of the school system depends, to a large extent, on open channels of communication between the school community and the community at large." The district seeks to bring community members together in a committee to serve in a liaison capacity between the community and the school district. We will begin a community committee this spring to gather information from parents, staff, students, and community members about upgrades that are necessary for our school facilities and conversations about student, staff, and campus safety. This committee will be tasked with reviewing data generated from the district survey (*see page one of this newsletter*), and engage in visionary discussions about what the community desires for facility upgrades and how the community and district can best support the vision. The Committee will serve as a vehicle for encouraging meaningful exchange among parents, school, staff, and Board Members on data generated from the district survey and facilities upgrades and student,

staff, and campus safety. If you are interested in joining this committee please click the link [here](#) to register your interest. Members will be selected based on the need to represent a wide range of community interests and backgrounds. The hope is that the committee will consist of at least three parent representatives from each school, one of whom represents the PTO executive committee and two members of the community who do not have children in the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District; one from Flemington Borough and one from Raritan Township, as well as staff representation from K-5 and 6-8. *Reference: District Policy 9140- Citizens Advisory Committees Link [here](#) and District Regulation 9140- Citizens Advisory Committee Link [here](#).*)



WELCOME TO A NEW MEMBER OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM AT READING-FLEMING INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Beginning this month at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School is a new member of our administrative team; Ms. Ashley Arroyo. Ms. Arroyo will be the new vice principal at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School replacing Mr. Anthony Giarratano who resigned his position to pursue other opportunities as a school leader in another district. Ms. Arroyo was Board-approved on February 11, 2019 as a 10-month Vice Principal. Ms. Arroyo comes to RFIS with experience as a middle/high school vice principal in Jersey City. Prior to this, Ms. Arroyo was a Spanish teacher at Pascack Valley High School in Northern New Jersey. Ms. Arroyo holds a Bachelor's degree in education with a Spanish/Hispanic studies concentration and master's degrees in both English as a Second Language and educational administration.



We are excited at the positive impact Ms. Arroyo will have on the Flemington-Raritan community. We are proud to welcome a member to our team who has such dedication to students. Her academic leadership, innovation, and bold thinking, as well as her bilingual fluency in Spanish will help her to be successful in her new role. Ms. Arroyo recently shared in a letter to RFIS students and parents, "*I truly believe and support our district mission of Every Student – Every Day – Every Opportunity, as it strongly mirrors my own views on educating our children for the future.*" I am confident that her participation on our leadership team will continue to allow us to support every student, every day, at every opportunity.



STEM
(Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)
in Flemington-Raritan Regional School District

March is New Jersey STEM Month. The goal of NJ STEM Month is to celebrate New Jersey's commitment to student success in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs. You can view the State of New Jersey Executive Department Proclamation [here](#).

This month Exxon Mobil scientists came to J.P. Case Middle School in an effort to engage more girls in STEM. J.P. Case Middle School Teacher Ann Ruppel organizes the day and facilitates, along with the Exxon Mobil scientists, a day filled with STEM-tastic learning! Eighth grade student Leah Kemp shared with the Superintendent, *"Most groups say that girls should be involved in [STEM] not just because they're girls, but because it's interesting. I'm involved in [STEM] because it's interesting! I'm involved because I like science and the hands-on*



approach." The eighth-grade girls spent the day with engineers to practice their skills at collaboration, problem-solving, brainstorming, with some math, science, creativity, and ingenuity thrown-in. This photo features an engineer from Exxon Mobil talking with Leah about the plan for a boat that was constructed by a team from everyday items like tinfoil, balloons, ice pop sticks, and rubber bands. The small team of girls was tasked to design a boat to float with as many pennies on the boat as possible. At the end of the day each girl took home an Exxon Mobil swag bag and a t-shirt. The t-shirt featured the Rebus pictures that are shown at the top of this article. Can you figure out the Rebus puzzle and decide which words are represented by the combination of pictures and letters?

Indoor Air Quality Update

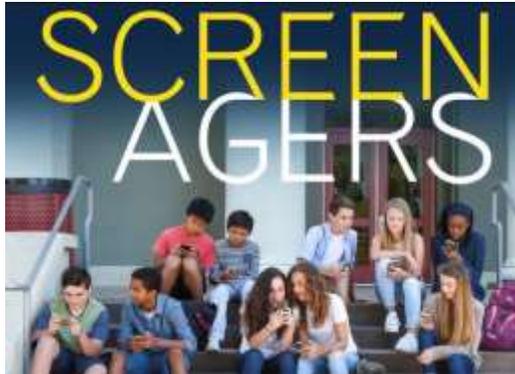
Who can forget this past summer with the issues we had with mold, mildew, and moisture in our schools? On September 11, 2018 at the Board of Education meeting I provided the public with the District's Indoor Air Quality Remediation

Efforts. You can find that link [here](#). Issues were first discovered on August 13, 2019. The District successfully remediated all six buildings in three weeks but couldn't avoid a two-day delay in the opening of school. The district partnered with microbiologist Dr. Wei Tang, Ph.D., and professional cleaning services from Serve Pro, as well as an outside professional consultant from R.K. Occupational and Environmental Analysis professional, a certified Indoor Environmental Quality expert. We have set procedures in place to keep the buildings dry and the humidity levels at appropriate ranges once the weather begins to get warmer. In light of all that has been learned throughout the state this past summer, the District will work closely with consultants to implement additional proactive measures to address air quality concerns. This will include air quality testing in areas where the environmentalist recommends testing and the use of industrial-sized HEPA air scrubbers and industrial dehumidifiers, as well as a consultation with the environmentalist. Should areas cause concern or evidence of growth occur the following procedures are in place:

1. Building Principal is notified;
2. Facilities team is notified;
3. Areas are cleaned with special Maslin cloths;
4. Porous items that cannot be cleaned are discarded;
5. Replacement of uni-vent filters, when needed;
6. Classroom temperatures set at 75 degrees to avoid humidity buildup;
7. Professional cleaning, if advised by the environmentalist and/or facilities team;
8. Yearly consult with environmentalists;
9. Dehumidifiers in place in all buildings;
10. HEPA air scrubbers used when needed;
11. HVAC monitoring in schools that have air conditioning;
12. Purchase of humidity monitors for use in the spring.

The district is in constant contact and collaboration with experts in the area of quality indoor air. We are taking the necessary steps to remediate any situations that are brought to the attention of building principals. Recently, a few items were found at Copper Hill Elementary School that had evidence of mildew. Items had been stored under the stage and were moved to an office space that was not currently being used and then moved to another location in the building for cleaning. Upon discovery by the building principal, facilities were notified, as well as the Superintendent. Items were determined to be too old to salvage and were discarded. Articles observed had moisture residue on seat cushions and Velcro straps. The seat cushions and Velcro straps were used to secure students in mobile chairs for students that have difficulty walking or staying upright in a seat due to physical disabilities. Immediately, the doors to both spaces were closed and signs placed on the door to keep the doors closed. The areas were thoroughly cleaned and HEPA air scrubbers were used as a precautionary measure. There was no risk to students, staff, or visitors. I provide these details so that our community is able to see how we are handling issues that come to our attention; safely, swiftly, and vigilantly. As a reminder, mold and mildew is all around us; inside our homes

and buildings outside our buildings. We cannot eliminate all mold. As referenced in the report by Mike McGuiness, Occupational & Environmental Analysis in the Copper Hill Elementary School Information report, there are no specific standards or accepted exposure levels to differentiate between "safe" or "unsafe" exposure levels.. "Given these limitations, we advise our clients to keep their buildings clean, and most importantly, dry." ([Reference, Initial Information- Copper Hill Elementary School 8/20/18](#)) The health, comfort, and learning environment of students and staff are important aspects of Flemington-Raritan Regional School District's mission. Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is strongly committed to the health and comfort of our students and staff, as well the environmental quality in the school.



Screenagers Recap:
Tips to Keep the Conversation Going
by RFIS VP Katie Lemerich

On Wednesday, November 14, 2019 the Flemington-Raritan School District was proud to host a free screening of the movie *SCREENAGERS: Growing Up in the Digital Age* for all FRSD community members and neighboring communities. The event was hosted at J.P. Case Middle School. We were just as proud to share this experience with our students at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School who viewed the movie on February 8 as a schoolwide assembly with follow-up conversations about the meaningful use of technology and time spent on screens.

The purpose of these screenings was to raise awareness of the impact that screen time has on students at home and school. Our hope is to inspire more interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. This screening tied into our district initiative in which there is no assigned homework on the first Wednesday of each month in an effort to promote time spent with families and conversation.

In an effort to further the conversation regarding screen time, in addition to the parent guide provided at the screening and to the RFIS parents whose children viewed the movie, we are also providing links to tech time circles. While we cannot provide the community access to *SCREENAGERS*, as the district purchased viewing rights to the presentation to be used in school, these resources allow for discussions without you having to view the presentation. We encourage you to use the

circle discussion guides to work with your child on the healthy use of technology.

What Are Tech Time Circles?

Friendly conversations about issues related to screen time and device use. Parents, kids, friends, family and community members gather in the comfort of their homes to speak, listen and learn how best to manage screen time and the effects it is having on our wellbeing. We provide you with links to free guides to help get it going.

1. [Social Media Tech Talk Circle](#)
2. [Video Games Tech Talk Circle](#)
3. [Time Tech Talk Circle](#)

How to Get the Conversation Started

Welcome everyone and thank them for being there and being part of this important conversation, especially the children. Let them know that their opinions matter and will be heard. Remind the group to be considerate, especially when they don't agree with what others are saying. It's a good idea to have an item that can be passed around and held by the person speaking. This will ensure one speaker at a time and eliminate interruptions.

Keeping the conversation friendly and flowing

Tell everyone all ideas and experiences are welcome, but it is important to talk with purpose and intent. Help link commonalities. If things get heated, acknowledge the concept is upsetting and remind everyone it is essential to be open and judgment-free. This is a friendly conversation meant to raise awareness about screen time, and help everyone make good, healthy choices when it comes to tech use.

How to wrap up the conversation

Thank everyone for coming. Reiterate some of the key points that were made. Remind everyone to remain aware of their screen time use.



Additional Steps for Increased Safety and Security for Staff, Students, and Campus: Class III Officers

On Tuesday, March 5, 2019, I spoke at the Raritan Township Committee meeting to ask the committee to consider ways to support the development and implementation of a plan for school district security to protect the school community's investment in school buildings, facilities, staff, and our children. I asked the Township Committee to take initial steps to explore the employment of Class III Special Law Enforcement Officers. Class III Officers are recently-retired police officers who return to part-time service with a municipal police department to provide security in schools. Unlike other kinds of security personnel hired for schools,

Class III Officers have full police powers and carry a firearm. The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is thankful for the partnership that we have with the Raritan Township Police Department and the Flemington Borough Department. The addition of part-time Class III Officers may provide a cost-effective way to increase presence and relationship—two key aspects of any program designed to enhance school security and, most importantly, student safety and wellness. We also know that police officers in schools become valued members of the learning community who offer important education to staff and students, alike. This conversation is only just beginning. I will keep you updated as we move forward, and will provide opportunities for you to share your thoughts and ask questions. I will be speaking to the Flemington Borough Council on Monday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m. To view the letter I recently sent home to families regarding this initiative, please [click here](#). Another easy way to ask questions and share your thoughts with me is through e-mail, phone calls, or at the monthly Superintendent's Roundtable Discussions.

sculpting, and building their appreciation for the cultural arts. Our students have multiple opportunities to showcase their talents through school concerts, drama shows, and art displays in the district and community.

Art classes in our elementary schools provide students with an understanding of symmetry, balance, and depth; art and art



forms in nature; awareness of different subject matter in artwork (e.g., portraits, scenery, still life, and abstraction); and choices of lines, colors and other visual attributes.

During the school year students practice skills as they develop their expertise in symmetry, balance and depth, shading, and more.

The music program in our schools is a favorite for many students. It is a lively and engaging program for students.



Elementary students enjoy choral singing and learn songs connected to different themes and time periods. Students play all sorts of musical instruments from ukuleles, recorders, Caribbean steel drums, and lots of others. Middle school students build on earlier learning to increase their musical skills and their expertise as musicians and vocalists.

Not to be left out, the drama program in our schools allows our young thespians a chance to stretch their acting muscles with musical favorites like Mary Poppins. J.P. Case presented Mary Poppins in a fabulous production featuring incredible actors and actresses. There were jaw-dropping transformations and moments the audience members loved—there were *oohs* and *aahs* coming from all corners of the auditorium.



Flemington-Raritan's Cultural Arts programs foster creativity and provide opportunities for expression beyond the limits of language. We are so thankful for our many Cultural Arts teachers and their dedication to students and to the arts. We welcome you to "wash the dust off your souls" at one of our school performances and exhibits!



SUPERINTENDENT'S ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Superintendent Roundtable discussions are an open forum for community discussion on topics that are on the minds of our community members. The February Superintendent's Roundtable discussion had to be cancelled due to weather. At the March Superintendent Roundtable 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 hopeful to share with those that attend. Dates alternate between school locations and evening and morning times in order to try to accommodate community members' schedules. Check the district website to register for future Superintendent Roundtable Discussion. March's session will be held at RFIS from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. Click the link [here](#) to register. I hope to see many of you there!

THE MONTH OF MARCH IS... "MARCH INTO THE ARTS" MONTH

"The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls," said Pablo Picasso. The Cultural Arts program in the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District realizes this aim through varied and rich educational offerings. The month of March is also Music in Our Schools Month so there was a lot of musical celebration! Our Cultural Arts Programs are comprised of art, music, band, orchestra and chorus classes. The Cultural Arts program helps student develop communication and self-expression abilities, performance skills, critical thinking skills, and an appreciation of history and culture. Elementary students enrich their cultural awareness through singing, playing instruments, painting,

FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2018-2019 STUDENT CALENDAR (Revised: 2/21/19)

September 3	Labor Day	School Closed for Students & Staff
September 4	Staff Development Day – First Day for Staff	School Closed for Students only
September 5	Staff Development Day	School Closed for Students only
September 10	Rosh Hashanah	School Closed for Students & Staff
September 11	First Day for Students	
September 12	Open House – Reading-Fleming Intermediate School	Early Dismissal – Gr. 5-6 only
September 19	Yom Kippur	School Closed for Students & Staff
September 20	Open House – Elementary Schools	Early Dismissal – Gr. K-4 only
September 26	Open House – J.P. Case Middle School	Early Dismissal – Gr. 7-8 only
October 16	Staff Development Day	Early Dismissal for Students
October 19	Interims Available on Parent Portal – J.P. Case/RFIS	
November 6	Election Day/Staff Development Day	School Closed for Students only
November 8-9	NJEA Teacher Conference	School Closed for Students & Staff
November 14	Elementary Marking Period #1 Ends	
November 14, 15 19, 20	Elementary Parent/Teacher Conferences <i>11/14, Afternoon; 11/15, Evening; 11/19, Evening; 11/20, Afternoon</i>	Early Dismissal, Gr. K-4 only
November 21	Elementary Report Cards (Gr.3-4) available on the Parent Portal	
November 21	Thanksgiving Recess begins	Early Dismissal
November 22-23	Thanksgiving Recess	School Closed for Students & Staff
November 26	5-8 Parent/Teacher Conferences: <i>RFIS-3:15-5:15 p.m.; JPC – 5:30-8 p.m.</i>	Regular Day – Grades K-8
November 27	5-8 Parent/Teacher Conferences: <i>RFIS- 1:30-4:30 p.m.; JPC-5:30-8 p.m.</i>	Early Dismissal – RFIS & JPC
November 28	5-8 Parent/Teacher Conferences: <i>JPC-1:30-4 p.m.; RFIS-5:30-8 p.m.</i>	Early Dismissal – RFIS & JPC
November 29	5-8 Parent/Teacher Conferences: <i>JPC-2:30-5 p.m.; RFIS-5:30-8 p.m.</i>	Early Dismissal – RFIS & JPC
November 30	5-8 Parent/Teacher Conferences: <i>RFIS- 1:30-4:30 p.m. ; JPC-1:30-4 p.m.</i>	Early Dismissal – RFIS & JPC
December 7	RFIS/JPC Trimester Ends	
December 21	Winter Break Recess begins	Early Dismissal
Dec. 24 – Jan. 1	Winter Recess	School Closed for Students & Staff
January 2	Classes Resume	
January 21	Martin Luther King Day	School Closed for Students & Staff
January 29	Staff Development Day	Early Dismissal for Students
January 30	Interims Available on Parent Portal – J.P. Case/RFIS	
January 30	Elementary Marking Period #2 Ends	
February 6	Elementary Report Cards (K-4) available on the Parent Portal	
February 15	Staff Development Day	School Closed for Students only
February 18	President’s Day	School Closed for Students & Staff
February 25	Kindergarten Registration at Robert Hunter School - Snow Date: March 4	
February 26	Kindergarten Registration at Copper Hill School - Snow Date: March 5	
February 27	Kindergarten Registration at Francis A. Desmares School - Snow Date: March 6	
February 28	Kindergarten Registration at Barley Sheaf School - Snow Date: March 7	
March 11	School Open – Make Up Day #3 for November 16 Closure – Day A/5	Early Dismissal for Students only Extended Prof Dev. Day for Staff
March 18	RFIS/JPC Trimester Ends	
April 8	Elementary Marking Period #3 Ends	
April 15	Elementary Report Cards (Gr. 2-4) available on the Parent Portal	
April 19-24	Spring Recess	School Closed for Students & Staff
April 25	School Open – Make Up Day #5 for February 20 Closure - Day A/1	Early Dismissal Day – Grades K-8
April 26	School Open – Make Up Day #4 for February 12 Closure - Day A/3	Early Dismissal Day – Grades K-8
April 29	School Open – Make Up Day #1 for September 6 Closure - Day A/1	Regular Day – Grades K-8
May 8	Interims Available on Parent Portal – J.P. Case/RFIS	
May 24	School Open – Make Up Day #2 for September 7 Closure – Day B/2	Regular Day – Grades K-8
May 27	Memorial Day	School Closed for Students & Staff
June 20		Early Dismissal
June 21	Last Day of School - Report Cards Go Home/Parent Portal	Early Dismissal

Contingency Snow Days: Three snow days are built into the calendar in the following order: 4/29, 5/24 and 3/11. If more than three days are needed, the year will be extended as follows: 4/26, 4/25, 4/24, 4/23, 4/22 – a determination will be made if these days are regular days or early dismissal days for students and staff.