



Flemington-Raritan School District

Parent & Community Newsletter

May, 2022 Edition 10

Editor in Chief: Dr. Kari McGann, Superintendent of Schools kmcgann@frsd.k12.nj.us

Co-Editor: Mrs. Laura Bruhn, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent lbruhn@frsd.k12.nj.us

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The world as we once knew it, especially in education, has changed due to the pandemic. In 2020, youth and young adults experienced a unique set of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic - isolation from peers, adapting to virtual learning, and changes to sleep habits and other routines were particularly damaging to students. The pandemic has been hard, but it increased awareness about the importance of mental health.

The research is clear, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the availability of services of mental health service delivery. According to an October 2021 article, "[Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.](#)" trends in suicide attempts and deaths by suicide have been increasing among adolescents. These trends in suicidal behaviors among adolescents are major public health concern in the United States.

The New Jersey Department of Education reports that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. [The United States Surgeon General's 2021 advisory report on Protecting Youth Mental Health](#) noted that one in five children ages 3 to 17 in the US reported a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder. As for children in the United States, the alarming trend continues with various reports indicating that 10% to 25% of children are affected by mental illness.

The district recognizes the significant impact of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences took a toll on our young people's mental health. We know the importance of providing education, care, and the support students need. Schools have a unique opportunity to identify the early signs of behavioral, mental, and developmental disorders, provide social-emotional support services, and foster skills necessary to address challenges. As educators we are one of the first lines of defense in supporting students when they experience challenges.

In Flemington-Raritan Regional School District we have seen an increase of students needing mental and emotional health support. Student needs in mental and emotional health support are measured in many ways, including frequency of urgent guidance counselor services, suspension rates, behavioral disregulated behaviors, and the number of student conflict cases. The District has kept careful data on the rise of support needed by students. We have recorded the following as evidence of the need for students to have an increase in support for mental and emotional well-being:

- An increase in the numbers of students receiving the highest level of mental health support using counselors through Effective School Solutions;
- An increase in the number of mobile crisis unit visits to our schools;
- An increase in the number of students receiving Tier 3 support for mental health clinicians;
- An increase in students being suspended; and
- An increase in the number of incidences of student conflict and aggression.

We invested a significant amount of our American Rescue Plan funding to hire additional guidance counselors, partner with mental health services, and provide counseling both one-on-one and group counseling sessions to students. Due to the increase of students needing mental and emotional health support, the District continues to put mental and emotional health services as a top priority, just as we do safety and security of our students.

As a reminder, in January 2020, a partnership between Effective School Solutions (ESS) & the Flemington-Raritan School District began with the opening of our Tier 3 program at Robert Hunter School. Our Tier 3 program serves the most at-risk students who are in acute need of behavioral and mental health support. In September, during the 2020-2021 School year, the District broadened its partnership to expand the implementation of Tier 3 programming at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School.

In April of 2021, ESS services continued to grow in the district with the implementation of Tier 3 programming at JP Case School. To continue with support, we plan to hire an

Did you know of the availability of 988, a 3-digit national hotline for mental health crises? We know that during the pandemic there was an uptick in substance abuse and mental health conditions and people of color were disproportionately impacted. We also know that, too often, people with untreated mental illness end up in our streets, in jails, in emergency rooms and dying and tragic encounters. Available everywhere as of July 2022, a critical step to ensure people in the crisis receive help is with [the 3-digit national hotline for mental health.](#)

additional guidance counselor for the fall of 2022-2023 as another layer of support for students. We have also discussed but did not settle at this time on moving forward with the expense, another expansion of Effective Schools Solutions. Expanding to an additional school would be an approximate cost of \$125K.

The District is here to support families. Your child's guidance counselor, school principal, school nurse, and your child's teacher all serve as a direct line of support for you and your family. Please reach out to them if you have questions or need to find additional avenues of support.

REDISTRICTING INFORMATION

Redistricting a community is a big project and can affect many families, staff, and faculty in a school community. The process of redrawing neighborhood school boundaries to produce an equitable distribution of students among different schools is tedious work and requires many to roll up their sleeves to review enrollment data, transportation routes, building capacities, programming offerings, and anticipated new construction. The committee worked through several scenarios before a final decision was reached.

The behind-the-scenes work was many months in the making and I am grateful for all who were involved in this important work. A new listing of streets and assignment of schools was posted on the District website for families to reference.

The recommendations by the committee include the following:

- Address functional capacity issues especially at FAD;
- Review and address the functional capacity disparity between Copper Hill Elementary School and other elementary schools;
- Address special education disparity in buildings;
- Address and balance the percentage of economically disadvantaged student enrollment among schools; and
- Address and balance the percentage of English as a Second Language student enrollment among schools.

To address the recommendations by the committee, the following movements are planned for September, 2022, year one of redistricting. Long-range redistricting plans for phases 2, 3, and 4 have been developed. In year one for the 2022-2023 school year:

- To address functional capacity issues especially at FAD families of students who will live at the Willows South (i.e., Willows II) will attend school at Copper Hill Elementary instead of FAD. These students are not yet currently

enrolled in the District. Students who live in the Broad Street community area will attend school at Copper Hill Elementary instead of Francis A. Desmares Elementary School. Some students who live in an area close to and including Walter Foran Blvd. will attend school at Barley Sheaf, instead of Francis A. Desmares Elementary School.

- To address the functional capacity disparity between Copper Hill Elementary School and other elementary schools; students who live in Raritan Town Square will attend school at Copper Hill Elementary School, bringing an estimated 22 students. (A few students currently attend school at BS, but will attend at CH for the 2022-2023 school year. More students are expected to enroll.)
- Additionally, students who live in the Broad Street area of our community will attend school at Copper Hill, bringing an estimated 30 students to Copper Hill from Francis A. Desmares Elementary School.
- To address special education disparity in buildings; the Language Learning Disability (LLD) program will move from Robert Hunter Elementary School to Barley Sheaf Elementary School;
- To address and balance the percentage of economically disadvantaged student enrollment among schools; the committee reviewed percentages of economically disadvantaged whole school percentages. Recommended changes will bring percentages from 11% at Barley Sheaf to 13%. At Copper Hill from 14% to 17%. Francis A. Desmares Elementary School will decrease from the anticipated percentage of 54% and current percentage of 36% to 30%. Robert Hunter Elementary School will decrease from 17% to 12%.
- To address and balance the percentage of English as a Second Language student enrollment among schools, students who live in the Barley Sheaf catchment area but have been attending school at Copper Hill Elementary school will attend school in their home district at Barley Sheaf, bringing an estimated seven students to Barley Sheaf from Copper Hill Elementary School.

As per Board of Education policy, the District makes every effort to reassign children only once during their elementary school years. In the months of April, May, and June the district will include a multitude of activities to ease the worry of families and students that will be affected by redistricting.

In my letter to the community about school safety the link for the resources is faulty. Here are few more links for guidelines on talking to children about attacks and tragedies.

1. [Guidelines on talking to children about community shootings in the news](#) and
2. [Tips for Talking to Children about Violence](#) and
3. [PBS for Parents Helping Children with Tragic Events in the News](#)

To keep the community advised of the new residential properties and adjustment the District must make, the [December](#) and [January](#) and [March](#) issues of the Community Newsletters featured information on enrollment trends and residential construction. [A link on the District's website](#) is also available to provide information.

Members of the Equity Ad Hoc Committee served as representatives of the full committee for a public share out of information at the May 23rd at the Board of Education meeting. We are very grateful for their assistance.

Dan Bland (Assistant Superintendent)
 Hanan Attiyah (FAD faculty member)
 Kristen Boyce (PTO and RFIS parent)
 Lori Castronuovo (PTO and RFIS parent)
 Marie Corfield (RH faculty member)
 Lindsay Shirvanian (FAD faculty member)
 Brittany O'Brien (BS faculty member)
 Sherri Glaab (RH Building Principal)
 Jessica Braynor (RH Vice Principal)
 Karen Gabruk (BS Building Principal)
 Mary Jane Custy (BS Vice Principal)
 Jesse Lockett (CH Building Principal)
 Amy Switkes (CH Vice Principal)
 Nydia Peake (FAD Vice Principal)
 Mark Masessa (FAD Principal)

Additional sources of information available for the public:

- This link will provide access to the [FRSD Redistricting map](#). Using this, community members can type in an address and be able to see if the house number has been affected by redistricting.
- This link will provide access to the [Board Presentation made by the Redistricting Committee](#).
- This link will bring community members to the [FRSD webpage that focuses on redistricting](#).

TRANSPORTATION WOES DUE TO DRIVER SHORTAGES AND FUEL COSTS

The 2022-2023 anticipates budget stress in the area of transportation. The cost of route renewals, driver shortages, and fuel increases are all anticipated to increase line item expenses. The increase in the price of diesel gasoline and the shortage of bus drivers continues to be of concern.

Our transportation department continues to be affected by the national bus driver shortages. The Hunterdon Central and Flemington-Raritan school districts shared ownership of the school buses owned jointly by both school districts. We are grateful for our bus drivers!

If you are interested in being a bus driver for the school district please contact the Hunterdon Central Regional School District. The ideal candidate wants to be part of an

BUS DRIVERS

51%

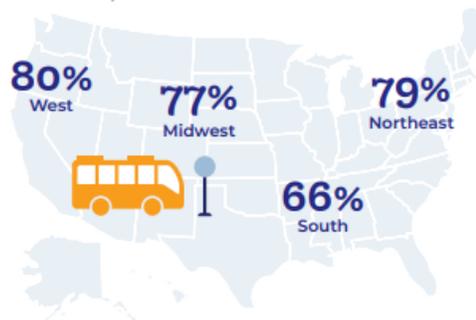
describe their driver shortage as "severe" or "desperate."



65%

indicated that bus driver shortage is their number one problem or concern.

Every region of the country is currently altering their transportation service due to COVID-19.



educational community and hold a valid NJ Driver's License in good standing.

The person must be able to pass a physical and criminal history background check. The position pays \$22.65/hour plus benefits. CDL training is available for those who qualify. Morning and afternoon routes are available, approximately 6-9 AM and 2-4 PM. Interested candidates must apply online at <https://www.applitrack.com/hunterdon/onlineapp/> or call (908)284-7154.

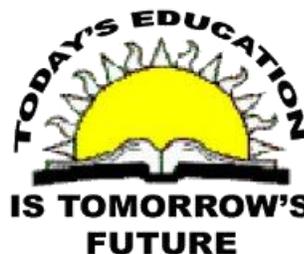


SUPERINTENDENT RIDES THE BUS DAY

As the Superintendent of Schools, once a month I ride a school bus on either a morning or afternoon route. On May 4th I had the opportunity to ride the PM bus at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School. Bus driver Mary Beth Walsh drives Bus #19.

On "Superintendent Rides the Bus Day" I build relationships with our bus drivers, listen to them about their concerns, talk with students about how their school days are going, and greet parents at the bus stops.

On Bus #19 I spoke with many fifth and sixth grade students. They told me about lunch, recess, subjects they liked and their friends in school.



Flemington-Raritan Schools