



Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parent Newsletter



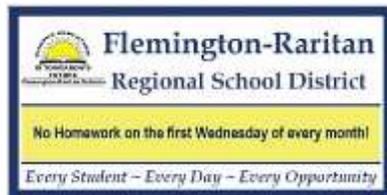
November, 2018 Edition 4

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NOVEMBER GREETINGS

Hello, families! What fun it was to see the children in their Halloween costumes—and how lucky we were that the weather cooperated and we had dry conditions for trick-or-treating. College students will be returning for Thanksgiving break, earlier sunsets beckon us into our kitchens and family rooms, and relatives will gather for traditional recipes and family meals. This year my family will travel up to north Jersey to my sister-in-law's house where a large extended family comes together to celebrate Irish, Italian, and American traditions.

I am pleased to share good news that I hope will be a lasting tradition for our district. Beginning in November, our district will continue to honor



No Homework Wednesday on the first Wednesday of each month. Please enjoy these homework free evenings spending quality time with your families.

A few other reminders about November dates:

Nov. 6 – School Closed for Students – Election Day & Staff Development

Nov. 8-9 – School Closed - NJEA Teachers' Convention

Nov. 14 – Screenagers, 7 p.m., J.P. Case

Register here: <https://impactflow.com/event/presented-by-flemington-raritan-schools-9495>

Nov. 19 – Superintendent's Roundtable, 9:30-11, J.P. Case

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/superintendents-roundtable-discussion-november-19jp-case-tickets-48605856425>

Nov. 14, 15, 19, 20 – Early Dismissals, Grades K-4 - Elementary Parent/Teacher Conferences

Nov. 20 – Preschool/Childcare Directors' Meet & Greet, 2 p.m., J.P. Case (*Does a child in your family attend pre-school? Consider letting them know about this event to bridge our local pre-schools with Flemington-Raritan Regional Schools.*)

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/preschoolchild-care-meet-greet-with-frsdsuperintendent-mcgann-tickets-51404167248>.

Nov. 21 – Early Dismissal

Nov. 22-23 – School Closed – Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 27-30 – Early Dismissal, Grades 5-8 – Parent/Teacher Conferences

Nov. 28 – Hunterdon County School Safety Summit, 5:30 p.m., J.P. Case (FRSD is hosting a Hunterdon County School

Safety summit to network about school safety.) The meeting is designed for Hunterdon County Superintendents, Boards of Education members, K-16 School Security Personnel, Hunterdon County College Presidents and Administration, police and county emergency responder personnel and safety specialists.

Nov. 29 – Joint PTO meeting, 6 p.m.



SUPERINTENDENT RIDES THE BUS

On Wednesday, October 31st, I had the pleasure of riding bus number 2 with Ms. Judy Wheat on the morning route with students from J.P. Case Middle School. This event was a highlight of the week! I received a few strange looks from students as they boarded the bus and saw a lady dressed like a crayon handing out pencils. I gave each bus rider a pencil that has our district motto, "Every student... every day... at every opportunity." I was told by our middle school students that they love their school and their teachers. Students shared with me that they love science and language arts classes at J.P. Case. I sat next to two lovely seventh grade girls who shared with me that everything in school is going well and that they have lots of friends and enjoy their classes, especially science and language arts.



Bus # 2 was a pleasure to ride. I think it's easy for people to forget how something as simple as a school bus makes a daily impact the lives of students, parents, teachers, and community members. Our bus drivers are tasked with the important responsibility of protecting our students each and every day. Each bus driver completes check rides to ensure the busses are safe and sound for transporting students, similar to the way a pilot checks his plane. Our bus drivers know students' names and greet them as they get on the bus. I have witnessed how patient our bus drivers are with students as they load the bus with full backpacks, lunchboxes, umbrellas, instruments and more. I am grateful for the service they provide. Thank-you to Ms. Judy Wheat and our Joint Transportation Services for helping to coordinate the event. I look forward to the next

Superintendent Rides the Bus day! Maybe I'll be on your child's bus in November!



SUPERINTENDENT ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

At the October 17th Superintendent's Roundtable at Barley Sheaf participants had a discussion about the district's indoor air quality, then 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 the building.
- √ A parent asked about substitutes and how they were selected; "Do substitutes have knowledge of Individual Education Plans and certified teachers or are they selected randomly? (Many of our substitutes are certified teachers that are newly graduated from college. Some substitute teachers are retired teachers and others are retired from other occupations. Substitute teachers work closely with the teachers on the grade level to be kept abreast of any specific student needs.)
- √ There were questions about the hiring of a new Director of Pupil Services. The process and timeline was explained for hiring new administrative team members. This transitioned into a conversation about special education and the goal for students to be placed in the least restrictive environment.
- √ The Superintendent shared STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) statistics about the need for New Jersey's STEM careers and the opportunity for the demand for talent in computing, advanced manufacturing, and engineering.
- √ Indoor Air Quality Remediation in Room 17 and the server room at RFIS has been completed. Results are posted on the district website. We have begun preparations for staff reentry. The remediation in the RFIS basement is progressing as planned. We anticipate testing to take place sometime next week.

The Superintendent Roundtable discussions are an open forum for community discussion on topics that are on the minds of our community members. At the November Superintendent Roundtable Session I am hopeful to talk a bit more 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 in order to try to accommodate community member's schedules.

Month	Location	AM/PM	CONFIRMED Date/Time
August	RFIS Auditorium	(pm)	Mon. 8/20 6-7:30 p.m.
September	Copper Hill Band Room	(am)	Wed. 9/12 9:30-11 a.m.
October	Barley Sheaf Library	(pm)	Wed. 10/17 6-7:30 p.m.
November	JP Case B-132	(am)	Mon. 11/19 9:30-11 a.m.
December	FAD Library	(pm)	Mon. 12/10 6-7:30 p.m.
January	Robert Hunter Library	(am)	Tue. 1/15 9:30-11 a.m.
February	Copper Hill band room	(pm)	Tues. 2/12 6-7:30 p.m.
March	RFIS Café Annex	(am)	Wed. 3/13 9-10:30 a.m.
April	JP Case Library	(pm)	Tues. 4/16 6-7:30 p.m.
May	Barley Sheaf Library	(am)	Tues. 5/21 9:30-11 a.m.
June	FAD Faculty Room	(am)	Thurs. 6/13 9:30-11 a.m.
June	Robert Hunter Library	(pm)	Tues. 6/11 6-7:30 p.m.

*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 Schools.



THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP
(As if you needed a reminder!)

Sleep is essential for a person's health and well-being. Sometimes, however, our busy schedules and hectic days wreak havoc with achieving a deep and restful sleep.

Sleep is key for "resetting" our brains. Deep sleep strengthens neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. Teenagers need about 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep, on average, and brain development continues to age 25.

Delta sleep helps maintain our ability to cope with stress and resilience. Delta sleep is our deepest sleep, the point when our brain waves are least like waking. Consistent lack of sleep depresses the immune system, leaving us prone to infection, colds, and flu.

How to promote restful sleep for children? Have rituals in place that signal bedtime and “settling down”, such as bath time, bedtime stories, and quiet reflections on the day with children. These should occur within 30 minutes of bedtime to settle the body and mind.

Our middle school and high school students are most prone to lack of sleep. Experts agree that most middle school students cannot do their best work in school because of their lack of sleep. One report found that 85% of pre-teens had less than eight and a half hours of sleep each night. Adolescents should be getting nine to ten hours of sleep.

When kids don’t get enough sleep their academic performance suffers. They have difficulty remembering material and concentrating in school.

And it’s not just the amount of sleep that matters. Researchers say that consistency and quality of sleep matter, too.

To make sure your child gets the sleep he needs:

- **Set a reasonable bedtime** that results in at least nine hours of sleep each night. Be consistent throughout the week. For teenagers, setting a reasonable bedtime means helping them to budget their time to complete school projects and balance extra-curricular activities so that the work doesn’t pile up into a single night’s effort.
- **Establish a bedtime routine** that helps your child relax and fall asleep. Encourage your child to read or take a hot shower before bed.
- **Set a screen time curfew.** Studies show that watching TV or using electronics 90 minutes before bedtime delays sleep. Set consistent rules about electronic time and stick with them.

It’s no easy feat to manage the recommended amount of sleep and a child’s active lifestyle between sports, homework, family time, and time with friends, children can feel spread thin. For more information, check with your family’s pediatrician or our school nurses.

Source: J.F. Dewald and others, “The influence of sleep quality, sleep duration and sleepiness on school performance in children and adolescents: A meta-analytic review,” *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, Elsevier.



NEW SCIENCE STANDARDS

(NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS)

(Contributing author, Mrs. Kristen Wolff, Supervisor of Mathematics and Science)

New Jersey districts have aligned curriculum with updated Math and Literacy standards. The district has aligned teaching and learning to the new Science standards, known to educators as the Next Generation Science Standards. New Jersey

adopted the Next Generation Science Standards in 2014. It was decided that districts needed sufficient time to properly prepare for the change. Therefore, grades 6-12 were required to implement the standards in 2016-2017 and grades K-5 were required to implement the standards in 2017-2018. The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District followed the implementation timeline advised by the Department of Education. As of this school year each grade level is fully immersed in the new science standards.

The NJ Department of Education reminds us that these standards are student performance expectations – not curriculum. The expectation that students reason abstractly, engage in argument from evidence, and obtain, communicate and evaluate information is both reasonable and important. Students should be able to do these things if they are to navigate high school, college, and work as young adults. We will continue to report on the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards as this work continues. (Here is the state mission and vision: Mission: Scientifically literate individuals possess the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision-making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity.

Vision: The science standards are designed to help realize a vision for education in the sciences and engineering in which students, over multiple years of school, actively engage in scientific and engineering practices and apply crosscutting concepts to deepen their understanding of the core ideas in these fields. The learning experiences provided for students should engage them with fundamental questions about the world and with how scientists have investigated and found answers to those questions. Throughout grades K-12, students should have the opportunity to carry out scientific investigations and engineering design projects related to the disciplinary core ideas (pp. 8-9, NRC, 2012). <https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/science/>

Information about the NGSS science assessment, otherwise known as New Jersey Student Learning Assessment-Science (NJSLA-S) and other standardized assessments that are state or district mandated can be found at the link [here](#). Last year students in grade 8, grade 11, and grade 4 or 5 were administered the NJSLA-Science field test. This school year the NJSLA-S assessment is scheduled between May 6th and June 7th. You can find the specific dates for NJSLA-S on our district assessment calendar [here](#).



GREAT READS!

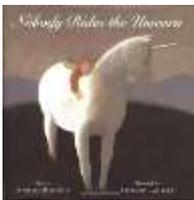
An integral part of our Language Arts program is engaging our maturing readers and writers with outstanding young adult literature. In addition to the independent reading students select, middle school students are trying out Book Clubs. Book clubs in the middle school setting involve four or five students who read, talk, and write about shared texts. Book clubs meet and discuss a text

they are reading in sync with another student or group of students. Since the conversation relies heavily on students having read to the same point in their texts, students assign themselves several chapters a night to read. Book clubs provide teachers with another opportunity to push readers to read more.

The district continues to adopt new novels to support Readers Workshop and Book Clubs. Newly adopted novels assist teachers to support student choice in text selection and students reading a text that is a just-right fit for them as a reader.

A fantasy unit of study will often have many novels that some of us have read or viewed. Popular fantasy titles like *Lord of the Rings*, *The Narnia Chronicles*, *Harry Potter*, or *The Hobbit*. From *Lord of the Rings* to *The Hobbit* readers are immersed in the readings of dragons and elves to a lifelong love affair with allegorical literature. The study of fantasy is really the study of the human condition. The stories are never really about elves and hobbits. They're about the struggle between good and evil, they're about how power corrupts, they're about the quest to be better than we are, they are about how even the smallest of us can affect what happens in the world. While reading fantasy texts a reader can develop a thematic understanding such as thinking metaphorically about the problems characters struggle with and think, "What's this story really about?" Fantasy texts encourage a reader to think about how characters are usually not all one way or the other; all good or all evil.

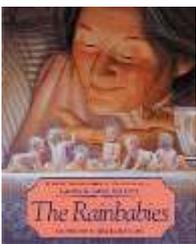
Even our youngest readers can enjoy fantasy books. Three of my favorites are:



The Paper Bag Princess
by Robert Munsch

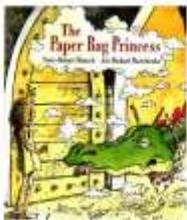
The Rainbabies by Laura Krauss Melmed

Nobody Rides the Unicorn
by Adrian Mitchell



A parent can read with a young reader helping the child to pay close attention to the details. In the book *The Rainbabies* an immature reader may not notice the clues the author gives about how the main characters try to prove their worthiness, but a more mature reader will be able to

pick up on the author's clues. Children can be talked with about patterns, archetypes, and themes. Even the youngest readers can think about "What's the story really about?"



Conversations early on in a young reader's life about literature set readers up for success with more complicated texts and build upon a love of reading that will last for years to come. Next time you read a book aloud to your child or read or discuss a news headline ask the question, "What's this story

really about?" and see what response your child gives. Their

responses will tell you a lot about what they are thinking about the world.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND LEARNING

ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW

GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS...

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS read well by the end of third grade	MIDDLE SCHOOLERS pass important courses	HIGH SCHOOLERS stay on track for graduation	COLLEGE STUDENTS earn their degrees	WORKERS succeed at their jobs
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Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life. How many are too many? 10% of the school year—that's 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can knock students off track.

Attendance Works
Attendance Works is powered by Learning Forward. www.attendaceworks.org

Half of all students who miss two to four days of school in the first month will go on to miss nearly a month of school in excused or unexcused absences, according to a study released in July by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium. The study examined chronic absence and found a striking pattern. Remarkably, nine out of 10 students who missed five or more days in the first month went on to be chronically absent—defined as missing 10 percent of the school year in excused and unexcused absences—for the year. If poor attendance is allowed to persist, the impact can undermine children's prospects for academic achievement. In the early grades, students who are chronically absent have lower reading and math scores, as well as weaker social-emotional skills than they need to persist in school.

In fact, in a study of California students for *Attendance Works*, the organization that Hedy Chang oversees, only 17% of the students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and 1st grade were reading proficiently by 3rd grade, compared with 64% of those with good attendance in the early years. Weak reading skills in the 3rd grade translate into academic trouble ahead: Students who aren't reading well by that point are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Chronic absence in middle school is another red flag that a student will drop out of high school. By high school, attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores.

A recent report, "Absences Add Up," also from *Attendance Works*, documents what many know from common sense: At every age, in every demographic, and in every state and city tested, students with poor attendance scored significantly lower on standardized tests. In school, this translates into weaker reading skills, failing grades, and higher dropout rates. Rather than looking at attendance as an administrative chore, schools can use the same data as a warning sign to change the trajectory.

Poor attendance can be turned around if schools work with families to monitor who is at risk for poor attendance, nurture a habit of regular attendance, and identify and address the challenges that prevent students from getting to school. The key is using data to identify and intervene early, before students have missed so much school they can't catch up. We need to start right away to connect the students struggling with poor attendance to positive, engaging supports and to activities that will motivate them to attend class every day.

I am happy to report that during the month of September through October 18th student attendance rate in Flemington-Raritan Regional School District was 97.12%. Our student absenteeism rate is something to be proud of. When students aren't feeling well and sick they should stay home until they are better. Our student handbook, school policies, and guidelines, as well as professional advice from our school nurses all advise us that when a child is sick they should not come to school. However, when students are healthy we want them in school and learning. Every day counts!

Hedy Chang is the director of Attendance Works, which is located in San Francisco and seeks to improve the policy and practice around school attendance. John Gomperts is the president and CEO of America's Promise Alliance, which promotes reduction in chronic absence as a key to improvement in graduation rates. Leslie Boissiere is chief operating officer of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which focuses on reducing chronic absenteeism and improving reading skills in the early grades. Visit www.attendanceworks.org Image credit given to attendance works.



Halloween Spooktacular!

Halloween parades were the place to be on Wednesday at our elementary buildings. If you didn't have the chance to see any of the adorable costumes simply visit the district website [here](#) to view postings. Children were dressed as their favorite characters. Teachers and building staff members flexed their creative muscles as they dressed up to represent all sorts of themes. From pilots in the cockpit to under the sea adventurers to bugs, there was fun everywhere! It was a pleasure to visit buildings this past Wednesday where students and teachers enjoyed celebrating together in combination with learning.



A Big Congratulations to Principal, Dr. DeMarco!

Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Principal, Anthony DeMarco, is now Dr. Anthony DeMarco. Dr. DeMarco defended his dissertation at Seton Hall University and now joins many other Flemington-Raritan Regional staff members with the distinguished title of "Doctor." Congratulations, Dr. DeMarco; we are so proud of you!

