



Readington Township School District Parent Newsletter



May 2013 Edition

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MAY GREETINGS

Hello, Families! What glorious weather we've been having! It's been so nice to watch our students on the fields for P.E. classes and sports games and to see our beautiful school grounds brighten and bloom with new growth. New Jersey is never as green as in April and May before the real heat kicks in.

Our students in grades 3 – 8 are involved in the required NJ ASK testing this month. We typically receive student results from these tests in late August and compile a district testing report in the fall. We track our performance on these tests each year, measuring our results against previous years' performances and against the performance of peer districts. Additionally, with new initiatives in place, these assessments help us to assess which strategies have been most successful.

In this newsletter you'll find a recap of the April Superintendent's Chat, a review of primary grade chapter books, and Earth Day celebratory activities. Please call or e-mail me with any questions you may have.

SUPERINTENDENT'S CHAT

Present at our April 3rd evening discussion were Jodi Bettermann, Kristyn Cullinane, Bonnie Jaeger, Beth Huck, Katina Foglia, Cheryl Alberino, Liz Woods, Pam Romanek, Liz Loew, Jody Kroon, Sylvia Rakauskas, Lee Eyler, Paul Nigro, and Barb Sargent.

I presented information about our 2013-14 school budget and addressed questions about various aspects of this, including staffing, new courses, and enrollment projections. The largest portion of this session focused on proposed changes to the middle school schedule. For our readers' interest, proposed changes include: daily World Language instruction, a double Literacy block with Reading and Writing taught by one teacher, a lengthier lunch period that offers tutorial, intervention, and enrichment, and a homeroom period at the beginning of the day that doesn't cut into instructional time. The Readington Middle School principal Sharon Moffat will host an informational meeting for parents later in May once she has something more definitive to share.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS

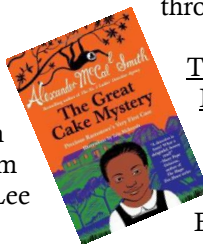
Vickie Tarentino, Energy Efficiency Coordinator

Our students celebrated Earth Day in fine fashion this year. Whitehouse and Three Bridges students sang songs, created posters, and read environmentally-themed books. WHS 3rd grade Student Voice representatives chose a beautiful spot near the blacktop US map and facilitated a tree planting ceremony for the grade level. TBS 3rd graders brought saplings home to plant. Holland Brook 4th graders have visited local streams to study fresh water organisms and other wildlife, and Girl Scout Troop #26 did some beautiful landscaping work at the entrance to HBS. At Readington Middle School, the science teachers led activities within their classrooms and students wore green or earth colors; winners of the energy contest were announced.



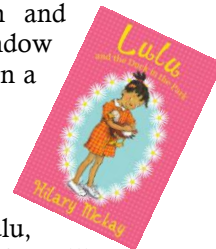
NEW PRIMARY CHAPTER BOOKS

Here are new novels aimed perfectly at children in 1st through 3rd grade:

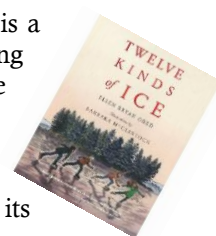


The Great Cake Mystery: Precious Ramotswe's Very First Case by Alexander McCall Smith is an easy-to-read mystery by the author of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. This book gives us a girl detective to join the ranks of Cam Jansen and Encyclopedia Brown and provides a window to another continent and culture. There's even a recipe for sponge cake!

Lulu and the Duck in the Park is just right for reading aloud. British children's author Hilary McKay weaves the simple story of Lulu, a girl who loves animals, and her rescue of a still-warm duck egg. This is the first in a series.



Twelve Kinds of Ice by Ellen Bryan Obed is a small book with 20 short chapters introducing the different kinds of ice that take one family through the winter. Probably better read in November when we're ready for some cold weather, the beautiful pen-and-ink drawings capture ice in all its incarnations.



A QUART OF GLOSSY BLACK PAINT

Over the December holiday break, I bought a quart of black paint in the hopes of touching up our exterior doors. It was too cold, however, to keep the doors propped so the paint would dry, and I put the paint away for a warmer weekend. Fast forward to early April and I found that quart of paint and set to work. The exterior doors and shutters on our house are black, so I repainted all the doors and washed the window panels on the doors. What an improvement! Then, as is the case with most home improvement projects, I began to notice other things needing my attention.



I passed the garage windows and saw how filthy and cobwebby they were. Precariously balancing on the tool cabinet to spray window cleaner on the top window pane, I noticed our old children's rocking chair. It was hanging from a nail on the garage wall, having been placed on the lawn last year with a "Free" sign. Alas, no takers. So, I spotted the rocking chair and thought of my glossy black paint. Voila! Two coats later and it looked like new! I bought a flowered plant, set it on the chair, and it now adorns my front porch.

Well, now I was onto something! Looking to see what else I could paint, I saw a wooden bed headboard I had picked up from a front yard years earlier. It had a "Free" sign on it and I had a Martha Stewart moment where I thought I could use it in the garden somehow. After at least three years of telling my husband, "No, don't throw that out! I'm going to use it somewhere!" I finally put a coat of glossy black paint on it and have it ready to "plant" as a decorative garden fence next weekend. I can just feel my husband rolling his eyes and thinking, "Finally."

My painting and shabby chic confidence was now at an all time high. I wandered around the front and side yard with my paintbrush in hand, feeling a little like *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, and touched up a metal lattice showing signs of rust and a weather vane that needed serious retouching. I finished up with two black metal chairs on our deck that we had been thinking were on their last season. One coat of glossy black paint and they look great! They'll definitely last another summer or two.

So, channel your inward creative self and grab a quart of paint. Maybe glossy white suits you better? Or grass green? Or **RED!** You'll be so impressed with yourself and the incredible results you create. Happy painting!

READING WITH A DEVELOPING READER

Kari McGann, Supervisor of Humanities

Your child has brought home many books this school year to read. Some books may come from the media center and others may have come from your child's teacher.

Sometimes your child will bring a book home that may seem too easy. That's okay; it's a perfect opportunity to work on fluency. This includes practicing reading with ease, expression, and correct pacing. Often, books at a child's independent level help them develop confidence in themselves as a reader.

Sometimes your child may bring home a book at their instructional level. Generally these books will be books that your child has already read with their classroom teacher. They may need a bit of help figuring out unknown words. Have your child "stretch" words or use the context of the sentence to figure out the word, but not struggle so often that they become frustrated. It is okay for them to read the words they know and want to try, and for you to fill in the rest. Remember, this is supposed to be pleasurable! Please take a moment to record the book title on the reading log sheet, if provided, and sign and date the paper. The frequency of these take-home book assignments will vary according to the day's reading lesson. Please return a classroom book the following day to your child's teacher unless otherwise instructed.

Sometimes your child may bring a book home that is clearly above their reading level. Here is an opportunity for them to read the pictures. This kind of reading helps students focus on details, put thoughts together in sentences and interact with books with complex story lines. You may also choose to read this book aloud to your child, stopping along the way having a quick conversation about what is happening in the book. These "think aloud" conversations with your child develop their own love of reading and promote comprehension.

With any book, at any level, you can focus on comprehension. Talk about the cover picture before you begin. Occasionally, stop and have your child predict what will happen next. Once or twice, as you read the book, ask "who" and "what." Having your child retell the story is a difficult but necessary skill. The more practice they get, the easier it becomes. Talk, talk, talk about books. Participate in this reading journey with them.

Remember our primary goal is for your child to enjoy reading. We'd love to hear about books your children are enjoying at home! Please feel free to contact me at kmcgann@readington.k12.nj.us if I can be of any assistance to you and your family.

From 101 Ways to Make Your Child Feel Special by Vicki Lansky: "Mail your child a thank-you note for something special they've done."

I wrote a note to my son Tyler after we visited my mother in a rehabilitation facility several years ago. I had coached him as best as I could about what to expect, and he was amazing! He was so kind and caring to his grandmother, pushing her gently in her wheelchair and letting her win at checkers. My mom has since passed, and Tyler still has the letter I mailed him. I still consider that visit one of his finest moments.