

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

January 2020

Message from the Superintendent



Happy New Year! I am hopeful that you and your family enjoyed the winter break. Having off during the holiday season provides each of us with some needed rest, relaxation, and time with our loved ones. The year 2020 brings with it time to reflect on 2019 and set resolutions for the new year. I think of resolutions as goals. After all, resolutions are defined as firm decisions to do (or not do) something. In September, I encouraged staff and parents to set goals for the school year, and equally as important, assist in helping children set goals as well. Consider taking the time to reflect upon these goals and talk to your children about their progress. This conversation is critical in helping children become aware, mindful individuals focused on their own growth.

The month of January also brings with it planning and preparation for the next school year. This means the administration and the Board of Education have begun the budget process. In order to deliver a final budget that promotes excellence, while also being cognizant of the impact on local property taxes, much conversation and consideration are needed. I encourage you to become part of the process. The Board of Education will discuss the budget during its February 4, February 25, and March 10 meetings.



Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897
Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

In Photo with Dr. Hart is RMS 8th Grade Student, Andrew Leibowitz



Curriculum Corner Math & Literacy Coach



In September of 2019, the Readington Township School District introduced instructional coaches in the areas of Math and Literacy. Instructional coaches partner with teachers to assist with growth and reflection in the areas of instruction, data analysis, and planning.

This is done through a variety of coaching options. This includes but is not limited to Co-Planning, Team Teaching, Peer Coaching, Modeling Lessons, Technology Integration, Analyzing Student Work, Collaborative Reflection, and Non-Evaluative Feedback. Teachers are able to reflect upon their practice and select the option that best fits their needs at the time.

A typical coaching cycle includes observing teachers, providing non-evaluative feedback, reflecting on instructional practices, and goal-setting. Coaching methods such as modeling, peer-coaching, and co-teaching are used during the coaching cycles to

support each teacher's professional growth. Our math and literacy coaches also facilitate data analysis and assist teachers in implementing effective instructional strategies. Personal and relevant professional development is provided to teachers through one-on-one coaching meetings, common-planning time, faculty meetings, and teacher academy courses.

Research has shown that instructional coaching has improved student achievement and teacher practice over time. According to Resnick, "No one expects an athlete or a musician to become great without a coach- an over-the-shoulder mentor who pushes and supports, watches and intervenes at critical moments, analyzes learners' actions and challenges them to become self-critical analysts of their own performances. Just so with teaching." Staff members have already embraced the instructional coaching model and we look forward to seeing the long term impact of this partnership.

Digital Citizenship Submitted by: Tiffany Barca, Joyce McGibbon, Wendy Reardon



Digital media and technology is evolving at a rapid pace, bringing with it amazing opportunities as well as real risks for our children. In our schools, lessons and discussions focus on becoming safe, responsible, and respectful digital citizens. Digital Citizenship and internet safety are an important part of our instruction at school and it is important to continue the discussion at home. Below are resources and tools to help your children use technology safely, responsibly, and respectfully.

Commonsense Media

Common Sense Media is a non-profit organization that provides education and advocacy to families to promote safe technology and media for children. Commonsense Media provides a wealth of parent resources including reviews of apps such as TikTok, Roblox and Instagram and suggestions on choosing the right app for your child.

Be Internet Awesome

This is a program from Google that aims to help kids be safe, confident explorers of the online world. The Be Internet Awesome Family Guide gives families the tools and resources to learn about online safety and citizenship at home.

NetSmartz

NetSmartz provides age-appropriate videos and activities to teach children to be safe online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and making safe choices on- and offline.

FBI S.O.S (Safe online Surfing)

The FBI developed the SOS program to provide children with fun interactive games that raise their awareness of online risks and provide the knowledge they need to steer around them. Together we can empower our children to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

For more information on each of these resources, please [click here](#).

Students from Three Bridges School/Mrs. Greenwald's Third Grade Class Practicing their Digital Citizenship Skills



In Photo (left to right): Anthony LaTorre, Ava Ganguzza, and Grayson Wooddell.

Technology Tips

A highlight from *Screenagers*



Recently a group of eighth-graders were discussing the film Screenagers NEXT CHAPTER, and a few of them told the teacher how surprised they were to learn in the film that almost 40% of teens with mobile devices in their room report that they wake up and check it at least once a night. Many of you have kids or teens with devices in their room during bedtime, and I am sure many of you have fought to change that and felt defeated. The folks at Screenagers hear

things from parents like: "I go to bed before my teens, so there is no way for me to make sure they turn them in, so I have given up." Or, "They sneak in screens, so why even try." Or "They have to do homework late into the night, so why even have a rule about this?" Do any of those sound familiar? Please [click here](#) to view some of the suggested rules and solutions other families have come up with to help keep devices out of the bedroom during sleeping hours.



SEL Practices Around the District

Social and Emotional Learning explicitly nurtures the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Readington School District understands that these five competencies directly impact academic learning. Our district family continues to take purposeful action that infuse these five SEL competencies throughout the school day to create a safe, inclusive, supportive and healthy learning environment for everyone who enters our doorways. Our SEL intention is that every student will leave Readington, socially and emotionally competent. This call to action is truly a team effort that includes the entire Readington community. Here is a snapshot of the SEL work taking place so far throughout the district:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10-minute Connection Circles at Readington Middle School and Morning Meetings at the elementary level to build a strong sense of community and connection between students and staff members. 2. SEL periods built into the daily schedule to support students in their social and emotional development. 3. The development of SEL integration in all academic curricular areas- At the building level, SEL teams meet to organically develop purposeful SEL-related lessons and activities that naturally connect and support our academic curricula in Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and special areas. 4. Monthly meetings with the School Counselors to address mental health concerns. 5. Integration of restorative practices and approaches to discipline that provide opportunities for students to self-reflect, set | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> individual goals, and build self-acceptance and self-worth. 6. Professional Development for all staff members related to social and emotional learning. 7. Workshops and opportunities focused on adult SEL. 8. A parent academy workshop focused on Vaping and Student Wellness held in October. 9. School-wide SEL assemblies in all four buildings to build school community, consistency, and connection. 10. Anti-bullying lessons, activities, assemblies and discussions focused on responsible decision-making and conflict-resolution. 11. Mindfulness practices for students, staff and parents to strengthen an understanding of self and provide healthy coping tools to manage emotions and thoughts. |
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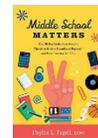
Book Recommendation for Parents



A book recommendation to add to your reading: “Middle School Matters: The 10 Key Skills Kids Need to Thrive in Middle School and Beyond – and How Parents Can Help”. Written by Phyllis Fagell, a middle school counselor in Washington D.C. Fagell maintains, with patient, loving help, kids can emerge from middle school stronger and wiser than they went in. That’s where you – the patient, loving grown-up comes in.

Author Phyllis Fagell’s 10 Key Skills

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make good friend choices. 2. Negotiate conflict. 3. Manage a student-teacher mismatch. 4. Create homework and organization systems. 5. Consider others’ perspectives. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Self-advocate. 7. Self-regulate emotions. 8. Cultivate passions and recognize limitations. 9. Make responsible, healthy, and ethical choices. 10. Create and innovate. |
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“Education is the key to unlocking the world; a passport to freedom.” – Oprah Winfrey

Building Spotlight: Three Bridges School Submitted by Principal, Mrs. Kristen Higgins



One of Albert Einstein's famous quotes is, "the significant problems we face cannot be solved with the same thinking we used to create them."

Three Bridges School is striving to become an exemplary iSTEAM learning culture, so our students will be prepared to solve the significant problems they will face in their futures. Our teachers are working together and pulling in their expertise in the areas included in iSTEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) to engage students in hands-on experiences designed to foster the essential skills and habits of mind, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge integration needed to become creative problem solvers and innovators.

Units of exploration are created for each grade level where they meet with our media specialist in her MakerSpace with a host of other staff members. The goal is to have students work collaboratively to solve complex problems by using trial and error, creativity and what they have learned in their academic settings. The scientific method of inquiry is used as the students plan, test, record, and revise their thinking while coming up with the most effective solution. While the students work, they are

guided and coached by Mrs. Romano, Mrs. Nabozny, their classroom teacher and Mrs. Furka. Of course, we are keenly aware that the tenets of social-emotional learning are key in successful group work as well as problem-solving.

Further, the students at TBS are finding age and skill-appropriate mechanisms to learn to code. Mrs. Barca, Mrs. Nabozny, and the classroom teachers are providing opportunities to use Beebots, Spheros, and a multitude of coding websites to ignite an interest in developing boys and girls who are comfortable solving problems through basic computer code production.

If you are looking for some great websites to help you work with your child on coding, please check out the links below.

[Hour of Code](#)



[Kodable](#)



[Scratch](#)



[Scratch Jr.](#)



Vaping – Parent Information

Please [click here](#) to access some very important information shared at our October Parent Academy entitled **Hunterdon United for a Vape-Free Youth.**

Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- **January 15 / HSA Business Meeting**
- **January 28 / Parent Academy**
- **February 5 / Superintendent Coffee Chat**
- **February 24 & 25 / Kindergarten Registration 2020-2021**

Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- **January 21, February 4, February 25, March 10**

