

## The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

January 2024



# Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

The snowy season is upon us! We have already seen our fair share of cold, rainy, and snowy weather this school year and winter is far from over. The magic of the winter season is watching children enjoy the cold outdoors sledding and making snow angels, then coming indoors for warm hot chocolate. My sons spent a lot of time on a hill behind our house last week! I'd like to thank all of our families and students for their flexibility when it comes to disrupted school schedules. Emergency school closures and delayed openings are not our goal but it is important to operate with the safety of everyone in mind. Let's hope for a warmer winter with less precipitation.

The district has been involved in the preliminary preparations of the 2024-2025 budget. The administration and Board of Education are tasked with developing a budget ready for approval in late April. In order to deliver a final budget that promotes our strategic plan and strong academic programs, while also being sensitive to the impact on local property taxes, we encourage public involvement. Please consider being part of the process by attending a Board of Education meeting where the budget will be discussed. These meetings will be held on February 12, March 12, and April 30.



**Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897**

**Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr**

In Photo Above: Luke and Logan Hart

---

### 2024-2025 New Student Registration Preschool, Kindergarten & New First Grade Students

Readington Township Public School District is conducting full-day Preschool, Kindergarten, and new First Grade student registration for the 2024-2025 school year. The district is pleased to offer these full-day programs at no cost to parents who live in Readington Township. If you wish to enroll your child in Preschool, Kindergarten, or First Grade for the first time, please visit our [website](#) to access the necessary forms, detailed instructions, required documentation, and contact information. Please complete the forms and bring them with you to our in-person drop-in (no appointment needed) New Student Registration Days on Thursday-Friday, February 22 & 23, 2024 (9:00 am – Noon). For more information, please [click here](#).

---

**“Education is a partnership between parent and teachers, working together  
for the benefit of our children” - Unknown**



## Budgeting Time of Year

Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator



The Board of Education is tasked with managing the budget of the district with the guidance of our Superintendent, Dr. Jonathan Hart, and district administration. As with every year, the first few months of the new year is when budgeting, planning and preparing occurs. The creation and implementation of a strong, responsible budget allows the district to maintain the many programs our students have become accustomed to. The district is also able to maintain the buildings and grounds in the manner in which our constituents have come to expect.

The 2023-2024 budget, which is currently being utilized, has helped the district to meet the goals that are set annually, and included some of the following highlights:

- Expansion to four police officers, one per building, through shared service with the Township of Readington;
- Additional elementary art teacher and grade-level teacher at Holland Brook School due to increased enrollment from new housing developments;
- New behavioral disabilities program teacher and preschool disabilities program teacher;
- Continuation of afterschool student intervention services for learning loss due to the pandemic, along with mental health services for staff and students through federal funding;
- Capital project upgrades outside the tax levy such as replacement of a roofing section and HVAC at Readington Middle School, bathroom additions at all elementary schools, LED lighting installation and outdoor gardens enhancements in line with sustainability goals, staff lounge refreshment district-wide, IT backend upgrades, along with various security and safety projects around the district.

The Board of Education shall hold open public sessions and budget topics for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year, tentatively set as follows:

**February 13, 2024:** Department, personnel & benefits budget presentations

**March 12, 2024:** Presentation on the whole budget to the public with tentative approval

**April 30, 2024:** Budget hearing and final adoption of budget

During the planning of the 2024-2025 school year budget, there will be some challenges facing our district which include, as of the writing of this article, staff and program modifications due to potential increased enrollment from new housing developments, facility upgrades to ensure both students and staff remain safe and healthy, along with increases in staff salaries, inflation and health insurance premiums. In addition to these challenges, the district continues to be committed to providing our students with a comprehensive and rigorous program of studies, with a full complement of athletic and extra-curricular offerings.

All input and concerns about the budget can be heard during the February 13 board meeting as well as the other dates listed above. Public input helps the Board of Education to create a fiscally responsible budget while keeping all of the members of the community apprised of the current needs of the district. Please consider attending one or all of the dates. As always, should you have questions, please contact Jason M. Bohm at [jbohm@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:jbohm@readington.k12.nj.us) or 908-534-2885.

---



## Curriculum Corner Overcoming Academic Anxiety

Dr. Stacey Brown, Supervisor of Humanities  
Ms. Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science & Technology



Inspiring a love of learning can open up many opportunities for students, but at times, academics can lead to feelings of stress. This can create a vicious circle: If kids perform poorly, they might become anxious—and that anxiety can lead to poor performance. Here are six ways to help reduce anxiety.

1. Foster a Positive Attitude: Parents' feelings about learning can influence children's beliefs about their abilities. A growth mindset can encourage a positive attitude toward learning for everyone.
2. Make Learning Relevant: Use the 5Es (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) lesson model at home to engage kids in hands-on learning and real-world tasks.
3. Set High Expectations: Creating academic challenges helps students develop strong problem-solving skills, engage in productive struggle, and demonstrate grit.
4. Create a Safe Environment for Learning: Children should feel comfortable enough to take risks and share their approaches to problem-solving. They'll see mistakes as opportunities to learn and feel more comfortable persisting in the struggle.
5. Use Positive Language: Negative language can fuel self-doubt and contribute to burnout. Suggesting positive alternatives can help students change the way they think about learning. Instead of "I'm bad at this," say "I can improve." Or instead of "This is too hard for me," try "Learning takes time."
6. Write It Out: Research shows that kids who write out or discuss anxiety tend to do better on tests. This can help them reflect on their comprehension, engagement, and feelings about a lesson. Soon, they will see more choices in how they respond to challenges.

When students take control of their anxiety, they can focus more on learning and less on their worries. They can begin to see moments of struggle as areas of opportunity rather than sources of stress.

Adapted from ["6 Ways to Help Kids Overcome Math Anxiety"](#) by Bonnie Duhé

---

### Parent Night – An Evening of Discovery March 20, 2024



Please save the date for our upcoming Parent Academy Night, which will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20th. This event, titled "An Evening of Discovery," is facilitated by our staff, students, and community partners. The event is aimed for parents who wish to support their child's academic development and to showcase some of our district's amazing programs and partnerships. Please [click here](#) for more information, and stay tuned for further details in your weekly school Genesis Blast.

---



## Governor's Educator of the Year Program Honorees – 2023-2024 School Year

We are pleased to announce the Readington Township District 2023-2024 Governor's Educator of the Year (GEOY) Program recipients. Our schools have recognized the following Teachers and Educational Service Professionals:

**Readington Middle School:** Will Daly/Social Studies Teacher – Ann Roarty/Learning Consultant

**Holland Brook School:** Olivia Orłowski/Special Education Teacher – Michael Cooney/Behaviorist

**Three Bridges School:** Jessica Hegarty/Special Education Teacher

**Whitehouse School:** Amanda Obiedzinski/Special Education Teacher – Jennifer Heppner/Paraprofessional

See our honorees featured in the photos below.



---

## 2023-2024 Preschool Program

Ms. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services

The Readington Township Preschool Program opened its doors on January 2, 2024 and welcomed one hundred five energetic and excited 3 and 4-year old children to our preschool classrooms at Whitehouse School, Three Bridges School, Whitehouse Prep, Stanton Learning Center and Berry Patch. The preschool expansion journey began on July 3, 2023 when the department of education announced the funding opportunity for free full day preschool. We were awarded the funding in October 2023 and were able to expand the district's 1.5 part time classrooms to a total of 7 full day preschool classrooms. Our district is dedicated to fostering early childhood education in our community and we are committed to making preschool education accessible to families by offering preschool experiences in district schools and at our community learning centers.

Our inclusive classrooms support the diverse academic, social, emotional and communication needs of all students. Our classrooms are led by New Jersey Certified preschool teachers and supported by dedicated paraprofessionals.

Several of our teachers are dual certified in early childhood and special education.

The New Jersey approved preschool curriculums that are used, Tools of the Mind at Whitehouse Prep and Creative Curriculum at Berry Patch, Stanton Learning, Whitehouse School and Three Bridges, are play based, as play is the most developmentally appropriate approach to learning. Critical components of early childhood education are parent involvement, communication and collaborative home-school partnerships.

The district plans to expand our preschool program for the 2024-2025 by opening a classroom at Global Pioneer and adding additional classrooms at our learning center sites for an anticipated total of 14 classrooms. Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is scheduled for February 22nd and 23rd. Information about our preschool and registration for the 2024-2025 school year can be found on our district website. Please contact Staci Beegle at [sbeegle@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:sbeegle@readington.k12.nj.us) or 908-534-2195 ext. 2955 with any questions.



---

**“Children learn as they play; most importantly, in play,  
children learn how to learn” – Fred Donaldson**



## **“Summer Spark” Summer Enrichment Program**

Mrs. Sherry Krial, Supervisor of Staff Development and Instructional Technology  
Mrs. Colleen Ogden, Summer Enrichment Coordinator



Explore a World of Learning with Readington School District's Summer Spark Program! As you contemplate your summer plans, consider having your child join us for an enriching experience to engage young minds.

We're excited to announce that we have revised & enhanced our Summer Enrichment Program, “Summer Spark.” We have added new workshops to our program, offering more variety each week. The program will be held the weeks of July 15 - 19 and July 22 - 25, at a district school. Families may still choose between half-day and full-day sessions to delve into workshops tailored for incoming 1st through 6th graders: Crafting Campers, Innovative Explorers, Culinary Creators, Stage Stars, and Playful Athletics.

Our workshops are thoughtfully crafted to be educational and enjoyable, emphasizing hands-on activities and group collaboration. New this year, each week will offer distinct classes, allowing students to attend both weeks without repetition. Our Culinary Creators will be cooking and baking favorite recipes, making simple desserts including creative non-baked treats. Innovative Explorers will explore with Legos, K'nex, Escape Room-style problem-solving, hands-on science experiments, and group challenges. Crafting Campers will explore various projects using different mediums, fostering creativity and personal expression.

We are offering two new programs this year: Stage Stars and Playful Athletes. Our Stage Stars

will sing Broadway songs and conclude their week with a performance for their parents and guests. Playful Athletes will explore Cross Country running and team games. Of course, no experience is necessary for any of our classes, and beginners are encouraged to attend.

Additionally, students going into new buildings this fall are invited to participate in our “Warm Welcome” orientation classes at each school: Kindergarten Kickoff (TBS/WHS), Bobcat Beginnings (HBS); and Middle School Mingle (RMS). These grade-specific classes address the unique needs of students entering a new building for the first time, providing a smoother transition for the fall when school begins.

All workshops are led by our dedicated district staff. Registration will be open in February. Secure your spot early. Class sizes are kept small to ensure individualized attention for each student, and classes sell out quickly.

Readington School District is committed to providing valuable services to our community. We invite you to explore, play, and learn in our “Summer Spark” Enrichment program. For more information, please visit our “Summer Spark” [website](#). If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to reach out to Colleen Ogden, Summer Enrichment Coordinator via the email address below: [SummerEnrichment@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:SummerEnrichment@readington.k12.nj.us).

Embark on a single or multi-week journey of fun-filled educational exploration with us this July!

---

**“Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him” – Maya Angelou**

## Tech Department: Chromebook Care Tips

Mr. James Belske, District Technology Coordinator  
[jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us) or 908-386-2502



Our Technology Team understands that a reliable Chromebook is essential for our students' learning needs. To help ensure student Chromebook devices are running optimally, software and maintenance updates are automatically pushed to each of our 1500 Chromebooks on a regular basis. If a student device is experiencing any performance issues we have the ability to diagnose and troubleshoot preemptively.

Chromebooks also put on a lot of 'miles' throughout the school year. Students regularly move between the school, classrooms and home with the Chromebook close in hand. Accidents can and will certainly happen with this amount of mobility. To assist and support students in caring for their Chromebooks we have created a [Chromebook Care](#) and [Troubleshooting](#) reference.

Some of the most helpful tips are simple and very easy to follow:

- Keep the Chromebook in its protective case.
- Use two hands when moving or carrying your Chromebook.
- Keep the lid of the Chromebook closed when not in use.

If students or parents run into any issues at all with the Chromebook, support is one email away: [techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us). Our team will respond promptly to assist and are always happy to help. Please feel free to always reach out to me directly at any time with feedback, questions or concerns: [jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us) or 908-386-2502 (call or text).

- For general technology tips and support resources, please visit our [Tech@Home](#) portal.

---

## Retirement of Holland Brook School Principal Mr. Paul Nigro

Mr. Nigro has submitted his retirement effective this summer. We are sad to see him go but thrilled as he moves to the next chapter of his life. Mr. Nigro became principal of Holland Brook School in January of 2012 and has stayed at the post for the past 12 years. Throughout his time at HBS he developed programs that include the Discovery Lab and I&D. He and the staff were always eager to try new technological innovations. When reflecting on his time in Readington Mr. Nigro said, "I am proud of my time here and will miss everyone very much. I look forward to welcoming in the new principal and letting them know that they will love it here. Thanks for all the memories!" Best wishes Mr. Nigro!



---

**"Retirement is not the end of the road.  
It is the beginning of the open highway." – Unknown**



## Building Spotlight: Holland Brook School

Mr. Paul Nigro, Principal

As the cold weather takes hold and we approach the middle of the school year, it is a good time to look back at the first half of the year and forward to the second.

This year, we welcomed three new teachers, Mrs. Dowden, Mrs. Ganguzza, and Mrs. Palmieri. All three have been an asset to this school. I look forward to many years with them providing excellent education to our students.

In the fall, we celebrated the end of summer with our annual Pumpkin Bash. Although the weather did not let us have it outdoors, bumper, we still had a great time carving pumpkins and dancing to the DJ. The newest member of our family, Blaze (photo below), made his first appearance at this event. Blaze, a name chosen by our students, is a gift from our HSA and will forever be the mascot of our school.



Below are scenes from our annual Pumpkin Bash.



This year the weather was not great, but certainly good enough for our annual Turkey Trot. This is one of two fundraisers for our fabulous field days in June. Thanks to all who sponsored students who love taking part in this heart-healthy and fun activity.



The annual Winter Concert is always a sign of the holiday season. A few years ago, I suggested that we move our concerts to the middle school. Their facilities are much more audience friendly, providing a wide stage and much better acoustics. As usual, our music teachers put together a holiday show that gets me in the spirit of the season. In the photo below, Mr. Hasselbring conducts our strings at RMS.



HBS staff featured below on Ugly Sweater Day.



As we enter the second half of the year (where did the first half go?) there will be many more days of educational discovery for the students. Class trips, field day, and celebrating our fifth-grade move to middle school. Our HSA is providing funding for a few new assemblies that should be educational and fun, including Bobcat BINGO, John Marshall weather, and a laser show. We always love thematic dress days!



---

## Mark Your Calendars

### Upcoming Events:

- January 30 / Special Education Parent Advisory Meeting
- February 19 / Schools Closed – President’s Day
- February 22-23 / Preschool and Kindergarten Registration Days
- March 7-8 / Early Dismissal Days – Parent Teacher Conferences
- March 15 / Schools Closed – In-Service Day
- March 18 / Schools Open – Snow Make-up Day
- March 20 / Parent Academy Evening Event
- March 25-28 / Paraprofessional Appreciation Week
- March 28 / Early Dismissal Day – Spring Recess
- March 29 / Schools Closed – Spring Recess
- April 1-5 / Schools Closed – Spring Recess



### Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- February 13 @ 6:00 pm
- March 12 @ 7:00 pm
- April 16 @ 7:00 pm
- April 30 @ 7:00 pm

---

**“Children are like snowflakes. They are pure. They are beautiful. They are unique. & They each soar at their own pace. Don’t try to compare them.”**

**– Unknown**