

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

March 2024



Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

The past few months of winter allowed me the time to really connect with students across our district, particularly during Read Across America Week. I witnessed firsthand the incredible energy and enthusiasm that permeates every corner of our schools. From captivating student passion projects that showcase creativity and innovation, to mesmerizing musical performances that stir the soul, and thrilling athletic events that demonstrate teamwork and dedication, our schools are truly bursting with excitement and magic. These accomplishments are a testament to the unwavering commitment of our students, staff, and community to excellence in education. As we continue to nurture and support our students on their educational journey, let us celebrate the magic within our schools and take pride in the remarkable achievements of our school community as we enter the final quarter of the 2023-2024 school year and look ahead to next year.

This issue of the Sentinel includes:

- Updated Budget Information
- Preschool Expansion
- Summer Spark Enrichment Opportunities
- A Warm Welcome to Dr. Moss, new HBS Principal
- The Whitehouse School Spotlight
- ...and much more!

Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897



Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

In Photo Above: Dr. Hart and Korra (RMS-Therapy Dog).

Read Across America Week



Read Across America Week is celebrated from March 2-6. It begins on the birthday of the much-loved children's author, Dr. Seuss. The entire month of March is dedicated to reading. Dr. Hart had the opportunity to read in many classrooms throughout the district.





2024-2025 Budget Highlights

Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator



The Board of Education is in the process of finalizing its [2024-2025 budget](#), with final adoption planned for April 30, 2024, focusing on high-quality student programming and the following goals:

- Present a fiscally responsible budget inclusive of a 2% state-imposed cap on the tax levy with allowable adjustments aligned to the district mission and vision;
- Prepare for enrollment increases from [new housing developments](#);
- Balance class size guidelines with scheduling efficiencies;
- Enrich students' academic experiences;
- Continue to implement the district's [Strategic Plan](#) for the 2020-2025 school years.

Staff and program highlights currently planned for in the 2024-2025 budget include:

- All educational programs and class sizes are maintained in accordance with district policies;
- A continuation of 1:1 chromebook/tablet initiative for students in K through 8th grade;
- Savings through shared services and cooperative agreements with Tewksbury, Branchburg, Hunterdon County E.S.C., and the Township of Readington;
- [Free preschool programming](#) for 3- and 4-year old children with 14 certificated teachers and 14 paraprofessionals along with 3 support positions in partnership with Berry Patch Learning Center, Global Pioneer / REN, Stanton Learning Center, and Whitehouse Preparatory School;
- Collaboration with the Township of Readington Police Department to allow for raises for 4 police officers, 1 police officer present in each of the 4 school buildings.
- Additional behavior health counselor, previously paid through a federal grant as well as reconfiguration of 2 teaching staff positions through attrition;
- Increased wages for staff to better align with market conditions, as well as new stipends and stronger extra-pay rates;
- New schedule at the middle school and revised schedules at the elementary schools to provide more direct instruction time for students, in addition to revised English language arts and math curricula and resources;
- Low-income supports for half day breakfast and lunch district-wide through federal funding;
- English language learners supports via Structured English Immersion and federal funding; and
- Continued implementation of the district's Strategic Plan work.

Further, the district plans for the following capital projects having no impact on next year's tax levy funded through district reserves as a result of prudent spending:

- Creation of new Readington Middle School main office with enhanced counselor and nurse suites, inclusive of asbestos removal, a new roof and HVAC replacement;
- Refreshed preschool classrooms, bathrooms and curriculum supplies;
- New art and computer room at Whitehouse School;
- District-wide solar expansion to meet 85% or more of all electric needs and LED classroom lighting upgrades at Readington Middle School;
- District-wide security upgrades in partnership with the Township of Readington/Police Department;
- Backend IT upgrades such as core switches and access points, among others;
- Playground enhancements at Whitehouse and Three Bridges Schools; and
- Softball and baseball field updates, fencing and district-wide signage.

For more information on the Readington Township School District's 2024-2025 budget or to view the full budget presentation, please visit our district website or by [clicking here](#).



NJSLA Comparison Testing

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



The Readington Township School District has reported impressive scores in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. In ELA 3rd through 8th grade, 72% of students have met or exceeded expectations, while in Math 3rd through 8th grade, 58% of students have met or exceeded expectations. These scores are notably higher than the state averages in both subjects.

When compared to districts of similar economic status as determined by the free and reduced lunch population, Readington has outperformed communities across the state. Readington has also outperformed the other school districts located in Hunterdon County. Furthermore, Readington continues to perform well in comparison to our District Factor Group (DFG). DFGs were developed in 1975 to compare student performance on statewide assessments

across demographically similar school districts. In ELA, Readington has surpassed the DFG, while in Math, the scores were in line with the DFG.

The impressive academic results achieved by Readington are not a one-time occurrence. Data reveals that the district has maintained consistently high levels of academic achievement since the 2016-2017 academic year, and its students continue to perform exceptionally well. New Jersey has historically been regarded as one of the top-performing states in the country, but the results show that Hunterdon County is currently outperforming the state, with Readington students leading the way. All of this success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the school district's teachers and students.

Please [click here](#) to access the presentation shared at the March board meeting.

Summer Spark – Enrichment Program

July 15-18 and July 22-25

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



Summer Spark - Enrichment Program Registration is now OPEN

Are you beginning to make Summer plans for your children? Summer Spark, Readington's Enrichment Program is now open for registration. Please see our [website](#) for the details of our two-week program, July 15 - 25. We have a variety of programs - New & Improved - for all students entering Grades 1-6, offered at our same low price. Additionally, we offer a 2-day Kindergarten Kickoff program at each elementary school. Pre-registration for Kindergarten Kickoff is open now, with payment not due until April. For more information, please [click here](#). If you have any questions, please email our Summer Spark Enrichment Program Coordinator: SummerEnrichment@readington.k12.nj.us

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

– Aristotle



2024-2025 Preschool The Readington Preschool Program is Growing

Ms. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services

The Readington Preschool Program is growing for the 2024-2025 school year! We are pleased to share that we received over 3 million dollars in funding from the state to expand our free preschool program. Next year we are excited to partner with Global Pioneer Learning Center where we will have two preschool classrooms. Additionally, we will be adding two additional classrooms at Whitehouse Prep, two classrooms at Berry Patch, and one more classroom at Stanton Learning Center bringing the total number of preschool classrooms to 14!

On February 22nd and 23rd, the district held in person preschool registration for the 2024-2025 school year. One hundred and forty-seven children registered for preschool. Families will

be notified by April 1, 2024 regarding acceptance status and preschool site placement. Children may still be registered for preschool by contacting Mrs. Gerry Glackin at 908-534-2195 ext. 2955. Children must be three years old by October 1st.

Our children who are continuing for a second year of preschool will also receive a confirmation letter in the spring. Children will require an updated physical for the 2024-2025 school year.

Please visit our district website for additional Preschool information. Photos below of Mrs. Beegle and Mr. Tumolo reading to children at Whitehouse Prep and Berry Patch in celebration of Read Across America.



“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” – Fred Rogers



Get to Know Our Next Holland Brook School Principal Dr. Jonathan Moss

The Readington Township School District is thrilled to announce the appointment of Dr. Jonathan Moss as the next principal of Holland Brook School effective July 1, 2024. The appointment of Dr. Moss was approved by the Readington Board of Education at their meeting on February 20, 2024.

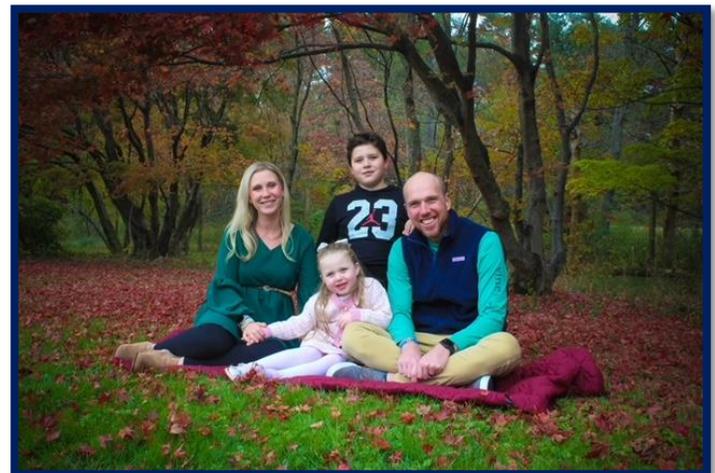
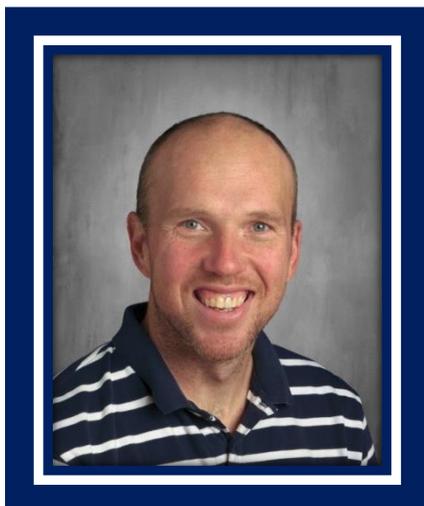
Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools is pleased to announce Dr. Moss as the next principal of Holland Brook School and shared; "Our community was looking for a principal to be communicative, approachable, and focused on academic achievement as well as school climate. Our search process looked for these characteristics in the next principal as we conducted interviews and engaged the candidates in formal presentations. Dr. Moss certainly embodies all of these qualities and more!"

Dr. Moss is a graduate of Montclair State University with a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and Health, The Graduate School at Montclair State University with a Masters of Arts in Health Education, and Seton Hall University with a Doctor of Education, K-12 Educational Leadership, and Management and Policy.

Dr. Moss brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to student-centered leadership. He comes to the district having served as the RMS Assistant Principal for the past nine years. Before that he was a Health and PE Teacher at Hunterdon Central. Throughout the exhaustive search process, he demonstrated a clear focus on student well-being and academic achievement, aligning perfectly with our school's values and goals. Dr. Hart shared; "As the district continues to prioritize the holistic development of our students, I am confident that Dr. Moss will lead with integrity, compassion, and dedication. He is not only passionate about academic excellence but also about fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where every student can thrive."

Dr. Moss is a lifetime learner that leads by example and creates a school culture based on respect, character building and research-based positive learning experiences and leadership. Dr. Moss has an amazing ability to connect with elementary students academically and is consistently committed to exploring new ways to meet the needs of all students, particularly through embracing the needs of the whole child with a focus on developing a culture of inquiry and a love of learning. Dr. Moss will undoubtedly make a positive impact on the lives of our students, staff, and families.

Dr. Moss and his wife Simona reside in Clinton, NJ with their children Tyler age eight and Isabella age three. The Moss family enjoys spending time down the shore with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.



#SELday

SEL Spotlight

Mr. Anthony Tumolo, Supervisor of Social Emotional Learning and Special Projects

March 8, 2024 was SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) Day. Last year, the U.S. Senate introduced a resolution designating March 6-10, as “*National SEL Week*” to recognize the critical role SEL plays in supporting the academic success and overall well-being of students, educators, and families. The resolution was introduced by Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Senator Dick Durbin (D-Illinois). This bipartisan resolution came at a crucial time following the COVID-19 pandemic, when heightened needs around students’ academic recovery and social-emotional development and mental health came into focus around the country.

Readington Township Public Schools have been invested in our students’ development of social and emotional competence for several years. This work and dedication are difficult to sum up into one day because SEL is an integral part of

the fabric of Readington’s educational system. The process of learning is both social and emotional and this is reflective in our shared values and district mission, which states, “*We empower members of our community to lead purposeful lives with integrity, to cultivate a spirit of discovery, and to embrace connections in our diverse, global society.*” This isn’t just a statement, but rather the driving force behind all of the work that we do, which cannot be achieved without all of you. SEL is not a one-person job. It is a true partnership between educators, families, community members, and children as we strive to motivate young people to be the change makers of tomorrow.

In celebration of SEL Day, here is a brief snapshot into just some of the SEL work that we do in collaboration with you, to cultivate the social and emotional growth for our young learners.

- [SEL Board-Approved Curricula](#)
- School-wide SEL-related assemblies
 - SEL Pep Rallies and Team Meetings- RMS
 - Town Hall and Family Conferences- WHS
 - Paws for Peace Buddy Classrooms- TBS
- Morning Meetings, Extended Homerooms, and SEL Periods
- Therapy Dog Program
- Multi-Tiered System of Support for SEL at RMS and HBS
- Community-Based Service Learning
- Anti-Bullying Lessons
- Child Assault Prevention Program
- Aavidum (“I’ve Got Your Back”)- Suicide Prevention Program



For further information, please visit the district’s SEL webpage by clicking [HERE](#).

Photo above of the Readington Middle School Therapy Dog participating in Read Across America Week with Dr. Hart.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead



Building Spotlight: Whitehouse School

Dr. Ann DeRosa, Principal

It has certainly been a busy and rewarding winter at WHS! We are thrilled to have the opportunity to share some of our recent activities and initiatives with you.

100 Days of School - Kindergarten staff members commemorated the 100th day of school with various math activities, while surprising students by dressing up as 100-year-old ladies. Pictured here from left to right are: Mrs. Elizabeth Lewis, Mrs. Jen Heppner, & Mrs. Arlene Schlosser.

DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) Time - We also celebrated *WHS Favorite Book Day* & saluted *Dr. Seuss* by lining the hallways and stopping to read as a school community.

1000-Minute Reading Challenge - Each winter, our librarian, Mrs. Valerie Zanardi, facilitates a school-wide reading challenge for one month and she tracks the progress of all classes based on the number of minutes read. As you can see, some bar graphs have climbed up the wall and even reached the ceiling! Individual students are also recognized and we have had several 3,000-minute readers this year!



WHS Annual Thematic Unit - Each year, WHS engages in a different thematic unit as a whole school. This year, it is *Mary Poppins*. We have been embracing all of the ways that we can connect it to other areas of learning for our students. Teachers integrated topics from the storyline into writing assignments that are aligned with our grade level programs. In mathematics, they “capitalized” on the fact that Mr. Banks was a banker, so parlayed that into a study of money concepts. Students also completed related assignments in specials classes such as kite-themed artwork, umbrella projects, Google comic animation, and *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* word play. As a school, we had a “Story Synthesis Day” on March 1, when our kindergartners and first graders had an opportunity to partner with upperclassmen. The youngsters used 2-circle Venn diagrams (hula hoops) to share the comparisons they made of the two different *Mary Poppins* picture books that they had read. Later, second and third graders synthesized the information from those picture books, as well as the *Mary Poppins* novel, using a 3-circle Venn diagram.

Additionally, we used the *Engineering Design Process* under the direction of our Enrichment Teacher, Mrs. Leslie Martinez, as we celebrated NJ Makers Day on March 14 while also aligning it with our theme. Each child created a One-Man-Band like Bert does in the *Mary Poppins* movie. Afterward, classes held jam sessions with their instruments as each homeroom group sang and recorded the Whitehouse School cheer.



On March 22, we will host the WHS *Nanny Poppins* musical. The performance is sure to be an artistic smash, thanks to Dr. Emily Bengels and Mr. Chad Schubert, along with more than 40 little actors from our Grade 3 Drama & Storytelling Clubs! A culminating school-wide Sing-Along event with clips from the movie is also scheduled for March 28, the day before Spring Break! Photo of cast below:



Spare Change Challenge - We collected and tracked spare change on a *Mary Poppins* bulletin board. The proceeds were spent on classroom libraries. Mrs. Razza's third grade class collected the most change (\$234.32) and won the Principal/Teacher Swap! All children in the class also received a free book from the Book Fair. A special thank you to Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey MacConnell for creating the *Mary Poppins* "chimney sweep" bulletin board for this challenge. Pictured here, Mrs. Ania MacConnell and Mrs. Megan Dustin are updating the board with the latest collected totals. They did this on a daily basis as they counted hundreds of dollars in change with Mrs. Tabitha Walsh!



Outside Assemblies - As always, we truly appreciate Mrs. Lindsay Salaj and the remainder of the HSA executive committee for their unfaltering support, and for funding our assemblies this year. Here is a list and a brief description of the programs we chose:

- *Superhero Omegaman & Friends* - focused on character education, especially making good choices and engaging in positive self-talk
- *Ken-the-Magician* - a traditional magic show just for fun because Mary Poppins is magical:)
- *Principles of Hip Hop - Peace, Love, Unity, & Fun* - for Black History Month & WHS Caring Month
- *Penguin Pointers from Jenkinson's Aquarium* - another nod to Mary Poppins and the penguin dance from the movie!

New Beautification Committees - Finally, this year we formed a new "Spruce Up Committee" comprised of third grade students under the supervision of Ms. Kelly Petersen. Each month, they help a different group of teachers complete various aesthetic projects or organizational tasks. Similarly, on a larger scale, this spring, I am interested in convening a *WHS Beautification Committee* with parent, Mrs. Carolanne Sherwood. Our goal will be to identify areas, especially outdoors, that might be in need of a little extra love. Please contact me directly if you have ideas or think you can help.

Tech Department: Chromebook Care Tips

Mr. James Belske, District Technology Coordinator
jbelske@readington.k12.nj.us or 908-386-2502



In 2023 our district was awarded a cyber security grant through the New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC), a component of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) grant is a federal grant program administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security.

This cyber security award enabled our district to implement network security software and monitoring tools to help protect our district from cyber security threats. Utilizing these tools and services, this security platform is monitored by a dedicated remote security team to assist our district in the event of detection of suspicious activity or breach. Additionally, network security training and certification is offered to the districts awarded this grant. District staff can also participate in various cyber security training programs providing further security resources. We are very grateful to NJCCIC for awarding and assistance in implementing this security platform. We look forward to a continued partnership with NJCCIC along with our other network security partners.

As always, please feel free to always reach out to me directly at any time with feedback, questions or concerns: 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 or email us at: techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us

"Tech gives the quietest student a voice." – Jerry Blumengarten.

Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- 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
- May 6-10 / Staff Appreciation Week
- May 13 / WHS-TBS Kindergarten Orientation
- May 24 / Early Dismissal Day – Staff Curriculum Day
- May 27 / Schools Closed – Memorial Day
- May 28 / Schools Open – Snow Make-up Day



Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- April 16 @ 7:00 pm
- April 30 @ 7:00 pm
- May 14 @ 7:00 pm

Revised District Calendar 2023-2024 School Year – Please [click here](#) to view the revised 2023-2024 District Calendar that was board-approved at the March meeting. Schools will now be open on Tuesday, May 28, and Friday, June 21, 2024. Please note: June 21, 2024 is now the last day of school and will be an early dismissal day. Graduation for 8th-grade students will remain the same - Thursday, June 20, 2024.

District Calendar 2024-2024 School Year – Please [click here](#) to view the 2024-2025 District Calendar.



Mrs. Buelow and students present Dr. Hart with a thank you card for reading to their class during Read Across America week.

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” – Dr. Seuss