

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

June 2023



Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Community,

The final weeks of school are upon us! As we look forward to year-end celebrations, clap-outs, field days, concerts, and of course, 8th-grade graduation, I am reminded of how much we accomplished this year. For me looking forward also means looking back and reflecting.

The district continued to move five critical goals forward. First, we focused on our strategic goals of inquiry learning, partnerships, and social awareness. Teachers were celebrated for their work on their own inquiry projects with both publication and presentations on the national level. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 participated in projects of their own personal interest and passion. You may have seen the result of these passion projects recently. Partnerships strengthened as we invited parent and community experts into our schools to assist students with passion projects. We also developed a shared service agreement with our Township Committee to place four police officers in all of our schools. Our social awareness goal was enhanced with "The Great Kindness Challenge" and a *Leader in Me* book club. Further, the district received the silver award from Sustainable Jersey in all four schools. This, and other green accomplishments, were celebrated in April at a wonderful community event. Second, we added two additional goals this year. We also focused our efforts on academic achievement post-COVID. We provided unique tutoring opportunities and clubs for kids, all designed to enhance learning in math and language arts. The district saw improvement in diagnostic assessment results and looks forward to analyzing the NJSLA scores. We spent considerable time discussing ways in which we can augment staff retention and recruitment. This has already seen some positive results in retaining more staff and even led to the Board's successful negotiations with our local association.

All in all, the 2022-2023 school year was a huge success! After the look in the rearview, now let's look forward to summer and fall. Best wishes to all of our 8th graders headed to HCRHS, and we look forward to seeing our students back for the 2023-2024 school year on September 7.



Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897

Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

In Photo Above: Dr. Hart and our Whitehouse School 2022-2023 GEOY Honorees: Ms. Razza and Ms. Albano

Summer Board Meetings – July 18 and August 22, 2023

Please note the summer Board of Education meetings will start at 5:00 p.m. in The BOE Conference Room located in Holland Brook School. The agendas will be posted on Thursday, July 13 and Thursday, August 17.



**Board
Meeting**

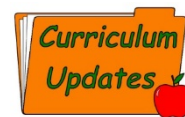


Curriculum Corner

Summer Matters:

How to decrease summer learning loss but still have fun

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



“What?! I have to read and do math during the summer, too?” Does this sound like a statement made by a young person in your home? Hopefully not, but if it does, you are not alone. For some students, the volume of academics typically slides during the summer months. Even more discouraging, some students’ academic engagement slides all the way to zero--- not a single book or math calculation all summer! Other children are avid learners, reading 1-2 books every couple of weeks and practicing math skills in authentic settings.

Research shows that children that don’t engage in academics over the summer, especially young students and students who are struggling, can lose up to three months of learning in just one summer. Make plans with them now to avoid summer regression. There are easy steps to take to avoid summer regression. Reading just a few books this summer, visiting the local library, and insisting that children make time for reading can curve the summer slide. Here are a few tips for keeping your children engaged in reading all summer long:

Be a model. Experts agree that this is the most important thing parents can do. Children mimic the people they respect and feel closest to. If you make time for reading and talk about the books you are reading, your children will be anxious to become readers, too. Make a list with your children about all the books they want to read this summer.

Read together. Find a series or topic that you both enjoy and read together: historical non-fiction, biographies, science fiction, or books that link to a summer trip or activity are all great choices to hook children into reading.

Give kids time to read. Summer schedules can be jammed packed, so be sure to find time for your child to read. Time in the car is a great opportunity to listen to audiobooks. Insist that kids bring a book with them to the beach or cabin or on a long drive or flight. Visit the local bookstore in vacation spots. Talk with your child about the books they are reading.

Check your child’s school website and social media links. Some schools offer a recommended summer reading list. Check your child’s school website for a quick guide to the best books to read this summer.

Set aside “no electronics time” daily. Summer days are long. There is plenty of time for kids to read a book and make reading one of their priorities. Start with an amount of time that can be easily achieved by your child and build time weekly.

Begin right away. Don’t wait until the last weeks of the summer to begin a reading routine. Start right away. Be consistent and begin as soon as school ends so that an established routine is set for the summer.

Here are a few tips for keeping your children engaged in math all summer long:

Highlight the math in everyday activities. When shopping, help kids calculate change or discounts. When watching a baseball game, talk about what players’ statistics mean. When cooking, try halving or doubling a recipe, and assist kids in figuring out the new proportions.

Read short math stories together. Studies have shown that reading math-focused stories to children, such as Bedtime Math books or the Family Math series, can help boost math scores in school.

Play math games. Games like Yahtzee, Racko, Blokus, Monopoly, and Set all rely on skills necessary for math, such as counting, categorizing, and building. Even playing with blocks and assembling jigsaw puzzles can help kids learn spatial skills and recognize patterns.

Find small ways to practice math at home. While worksheets alone won't solve the summer math slump, small amounts of practice with basic formulas can help. Problem-of-the-day math calendars are a great way to practice basic math problems on a small scale. Parents can also find resources on Investigations about what types of mathematical procedures they should be practicing with their children. -- *Summer Math Loss* by Leah Schafer

Promoting a child's love of learning is one of the most important things we can do as parents to put our children on the road to success. Keep the learning alive this summer and reap the benefits in the fall when your child goes back to school with confidence.

Summer Enrichment

Mrs. Colleen Ogden, Summer Enrichment Coordinator
cogden@readington.k12.nj.us



Summer Enrichment courses will be held at district schools on **July 31 – August 3, 2023**, from 9:30 a.m. to Noon, and **August 10 - 13, 2023**, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There are still openings for the July and August dates. Registration and additional information can be found on the Readington School District Summer Enrichment Website. Please [click here](#) to access.

Tech Department: Summer Message

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



It is almost a wrap on another school year for our students and staff! During the course of this school year, our technology team has helped support over 1400 student Chromebooks. It is always rewarding to see our students utilize and benefit from the various technologies available throughout our district. With the support of an awesome teaching and technical support staff, students every day relied on and incorporated technology into their learning requirements. We are looking forward to seeing our students put down their Chromebooks and have a wonderful and restful summer break! Feel free to reach out to me directly anytime with technology questions, feedback or general comments.

Screenagers Podcast Summer Reset on Online and Offline



Dr. Delaney Ruston, MD., is kicking off Screenagers Podcasts referred to as BLOGCASTS this summer. The first BLOGCAST will be about a summer reset, both in terms of screen time policies in our homes and ideas for things to do off screens. Summer's wide open time spans can

heighten battles over technology use. This is a perfect time to revisit guidelines and rules, what's working, and what's not. Please [click here](#) to listen in to hear the whole podcast episode.

**“Summer has a flavor like no other. Always fresh and simmered in sunshine.” –
Oprah Winfrey**

Business Office Spotlight: **Payschools – New Cafeteria Platform for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Mr. Ray Egbert, Assistant Business Administrator
Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator



The Readington Township Board of Education received notification in April 2023 from our current cafeteria software vendor that they were no longer supporting the software platform we have been utilizing. This software is how parents deposit funds for their child(ren)'s lunches and track which food purchases are made. The vendor indicated the underlying code of the software and new regulations from the State of New Jersey as well as the federal government made the existing platform unsustainable moving forward. Accordingly, the district is needing to migrate cafeteria software platforms for the 2023-2024 school year.

After careful consideration of various cafeteria software platforms, review of surrounding districts and users of other platforms, the district has decided to migrate to Payschools effective July 1, 2023. Payschools can accomplish the same tasks as the prior software, synchronizes with our student database system (Genesis), and allows for more flexibility on payment of other fees that might be explored in the future to provide more options to parents. The transition will utilize cafeteria funding without using local tax levy funds.

Although there should be minimal impact to you as a parent/guardian, the district is providing you this information to keep you informed on the migration and eventual need to setup a new username and password on Payschools over the summer/fall of the 2023-2024 school year. Information on how to do such will be conveyed in the summer (expecting late July) once the migration has been completed. Auto-replenishment of funds will cease in the old system near the end of the school year, and your existing lunch balances will be migrated automatically to the new system. Cash remains in the district's bank account at all times; therefore, only the movement of data from one software to the other shall be required. It is recommended you review your child(ren)'s lunch balances on the last day of school should you wish to verify your child(ren)'s starting balances in September 2023.

We thank you in advance for your patience as we navigate in the 2023-2024 school year. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ray Egbert (rayegbert@readington.k12.nj.us) or Jason Bohm (jbohm@readington.k12.nj.us), or by calling 908-534-2885.

Green Committee Highlight: **Readington Schools Host a Special Earth Day Celebration**

Ms. Jodi Bettermann, Chair of the Green Committee

Three Bridges School hosted a community celebration of the Readington School District's continuing commitment to sustainability as part of Earth Day. The event brought together students, families, Readington School staff, Readington municipal partners, and local community members to share in the success of green initiatives in the district.

While Earth Day began in 1970, the Readington School District's green initiatives began in 2010 with an initial focus on energy conservation as part of cost saving efforts. The success of that energy efficiency program went far beyond saving hundreds of thousands of dollars and became a springboard for environmental education, resource conservation, and health and wellness that are part of the culture in the district today. The community was invited to celebrate not only the most recent achievements of Readington Schools including Sustainable Jersey silver certification for all schools, a Digital Star award for

Whitehouse School, and Best of NJ Farm to School Award for Three Bridges School, but also to recognize the legacy of award-winning sustainability programs and education in the district. The many partnerships related to green initiatives were also highlighted at the event including a student curated presentation about community partnerships that brought a bioswale to Three Bridges School's water detention basin. Locally sourced food was provided by the district's food service vendor, Maschio's, as well as by several local businesses. Student participation included the Readington Middle School EcoAmbassadors' presentation with Three Bridges School and Whitehouse School Third Grade students and the Holland Brook School Cooking Club table of Earth Day treats.

We want to thank the following vendors for the generous contributions they made to this beautiful celebratory event: Sutton Family Farm, Readington River Buffalo Farm, Fulper Family Farmstead, Gorgeous Goat Creamery, Wild Spawn Mushrooms, Stanton Valley Farm, Black Sheep Farm, Vampire Hill Scape, Zone 7, Amwell Valley Organic Grains, Bob's Buzzy Bees, Blue Moon Acres, First Field, Landisville Produce, Morganics, and Phillips Farm.

Readington School District continues to strive toward a more sustainable future for our community, staff, and students. This work is embedded in one of the district's Strategic Goals that states: "Every individual will develop skills that promote an awareness of self and others as well as the environment, including the ability to understand the impact of their decisions." Please [click here](#) for more information on the district's accomplishments, and to visit the Green Initiatives part of the Readington Township Public Schools website.



In photo on left above, our student presenters (front row/left to right): Kenise Richardson/TBS-3, Daisy Vilchis Veyta/TBS-3, Tanner Forman/RMS-8, Matthew John/WHS-3, Tanvi Gupta/WHS-3, (back row/left to right): Jenea Richardson/RMS-7, Michael Veyta/RMS-8, Anne Albrecht-Smith/RMS-7, Katherine John/HCRHS-9, Margery Spivey/RMS-6, Ryan Trapp/RMS-8, Riya Gupta/HCRHS-10, Isabella Koenitzer/RMS-7, and Jack Forman/RMS-8. In photo on right above (left to right/back row): Beth Fiore/Board Member with her children, Margorie Spivey, (left to right/front row): Nicholas and Mark Spivey.

Building Spotlight: Holland Brook School

Mr. Paul Nigro, Principal



Passion Projects

As part of our strategic plan, specifically a focus on inquisitive learning, our fifth graders were asked to extend their thinking when it came to an interest of theirs. This was done in their language art's class as part of the nonfiction unit.

After choosing a topic they were interested in and reading an article about it, students did further research to find out more about their topic. Topics ranged from the human brain, to Morse code to football. They presented their topics to their teachers, Dr. Hart and eventually the Board of Education. The simple question beginning with the words, *I wonder*, led to some great presentations by a lot of young experts.

Bobcat Bonanza

Last Friday we celebrated our second activity day which has just been named Bobcat Bonanza. This was a great day. Your children got to choose four, teacher run activities from a long list that included:

Art, Board Games, Bracelet Making, Card Games, Cooperative Games, Cup Stacking, Diamond Painting, Drawing, Gaga Pit, Glow Bowling, Ojos de Dios, Hair Styles & Tips, Instruments & Music Games, K'nex/Legos, Karaoke, Origami, Reading/Creative Writing, Shape Poetry, Spooky Stories, Tie Dye Paper Towels, Track, Yoga and ZenArt.

This was a great way to spend our early dismissal day before the long weekend. It was nice to see the students enjoying a day where their teachers (and principal) shared our skills outside of the curriculum. Please see the pictures below.

Field Days

On June 5 (4th grade) and June 12 (5th grade) we will have our annual field day. This will again be held at the Branchburg Sports Complex. It is a great day of fun for your students that they will love.

For those parents of 5th graders, set aside time on your calendar for the Clap Out scheduled for Tuesday, June 20 at 1:15 in our gym. This is a great way to conclude their two years here. As your summer starts, I wish you many exciting adventures and lots of rest. Good luck to all our Vikings. Have a great summer!



Special Education Spotlight

Summer is Right Around the Corner

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services



Summer is quickly approaching. Our children are not only transitioning from a school year to summer, but they are moving from a school year that is full of structure, routines and schedules to many hours of free time or at least a much less structured day. There are ways to help reduce the stress of transitioning from school year to

summer break. Think about creating a summer schedule/calendar with your child. Schedules provide much-needed consistency for children and parents! First, brainstorm a list of “have to dos” and “want to dos” with your child. List everything such as:

- Day trips - zoo, park, aquarium
- art activities
- cooking or baking - great activity to reinforce reading and math skills
- gardening
- playing games - another great way to reinforce social skills, math skills
- playing with friends
- pool time
- summer camp/ESY
- therapy sessions or doctor appointments
- chores: feeding the pet, unloading the dishwasher
- school work/reading/journaling

If your child has a hard time verbally expressing what he or she wants to do, use pictures from magazines or printed from the internet to show some choices. Then go through the pictures together.

Next, create a visual calendar or schedule. Many children with IEPs and even neuro-typical younger children love using visual calendars! These are simply calendars with pictures instead of words so that they’re easier to understand for children who can’t yet read or don’t read well. The calendar /schedule can be as specific or general as possible. The idea is that everyone needs to know what is on the list for each day. Plan some “down days” to help keep your child from being overwhelmed.

The schedule/calendar can be a printed calendar page or draw one on a poster board if you need more space. Then draw, cut out pictures, or even use photos to show the must dos and want to do activities.

If a month is too much information or is too overwhelming, you can do a week at a time instead. If a week is still too much, do a daily schedule instead! For a daily schedule, simply include drawings, pictures you’ve cut out, or photos to show the order of activities for the day. This way your child will still know what to expect.

Be sure to review the schedule/calendar daily. Also, try to keep as many “school year routines” as possible in place during the summer. Routines provide a sense of predictability, consistency and structure. Consistent routines may help reduce anxiety and meltdowns. A few ideas for a summer routine may include: a morning meeting to review the daily schedule, have a consistent wake-up and bedtime routine, schedule regular meals and snacks, plan some down time each day.

Most importantly, enjoy the summer!



Goodbye to our Retirees

The following retirees were recognized at our May 9, 2023 Board of Education meeting with appreciation for their years of service to the students of the Readington Township School District. Please join Dr. Hart in wishing our retirees all the best in this next chapter of life.

Holland Brook School

Ms. Susan Johnson, Grade 4 Teacher
Mr. Jack Kimple, Paraprofessional
Ms. Barbara Pauley, School Counselor

Three Bridges School

Ms. Kathleen Kirk, Paraprofessional
Ms. Deb Sevell, Secretary



Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Events:

- June 21 / Early Dismissal – Last Day of School
- September 7 / First Day of School for Students

Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- June 13, July 18, and August 22, 2023



“Good bye may seem forever. Farewell is like the end, but in my heart is the memory and there you will always be.” – Disney