

## The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

January 2022



# Message from the Superintendent

The winter months are upon us and the recent snow storm reminded us of how beautiful the winter can be. It was enough accumulation for children to enjoy sledding, snowman making, and hot chocolate. My two boys really enjoyed the first snowfall of the season! Winter also signals to us that the new year is here.

A few weeks ago we rang in the year 2022! It's hard to believe how quickly time has gone and that we turned calendars to a new month and new year. As 2021 becomes part of history, I think of each new year bringing with it excitement and promise of all the possibilities that lie ahead. One of my favorite country music artists, Brad Paisley, said about the first day of the new year, "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one." The new year gives a fresh beginning or an opportunity to make the year 2022 something great. There are 365 days worth of people to talk to, experiences to have, and memories to make. Think of each day as an opportunity to write a new page of your own book.

(In Photo: Luke and Logan Hart – Enjoying Hot Chocolate)



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

**Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr**

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## Green Policies Remain a Priority for our District

For the better part of a decade the Readington Township School District has made a commitment to greening our schools and energy efficiency. Our district has been the recipient of the Green Ribbon Award for all four schools and we have achieved Sustainable Jersey recognition for the past two cycles. Recently our district has been highlighted, and district staff interviewed, for contribution to a forthcoming publication from the University of Cincinnati about green schools. In our continued efforts to ensure our schools remain environmentally friendly, we have updated our green policies. These updates

affirm our commitment to this critical district initiative. Thanks to the Green Committee and its volunteers, we have maintained or augmented our policies to include: green building where possible, safe routes to school, green cleaning and purchasing efforts, and professional development for staff in the area of environmental sustainability. We anticipate the policies being finalized at the January 18, 2022 Board of Education meeting. Please check our [Green Initiatives](#) website in the coming weeks to review the updated policies and other green projects from around the district.

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***"Children are like snowflakes – each one is unique" – Steve Rowley***

## Curriculum Corner District Tutoring Programs

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



The COVID pandemic has led to unprecedented disruptions in student learning across the United States. Although we were fortunate that Readington Township Public Schools were open for in-person instruction for the majority of last year, every student needed a different combination and level of resources in order to be successful. We have supported students through differentiated instruction in the classroom, small group reteaching, our intervention program, and summer tutoring.

Research has shown that tutoring programs consistently have large, positive impacts on students and are one of the most agreed-upon, impactful tools educators can use to improve student learning. The benefits of tutoring include improved academic performance, study habits, self-esteem, skill maintenance, and critical thinking. In a continued effort to support our students, we have added the After School Accelerate Program to the services the district offers. This tutoring program is available to at-risk students who meet specific criteria in reading and/or math. The criteria included Start Strong test scores, in-district benchmark assessments, and classroom grades.

A number of our talented and dedicated staff extended their school day in order to provide small group, in-person tutoring for our students. Math tutoring through the After School Accelerate Program began in November in grades 2-8. Tutoring for English Language Arts (ELA) also began in November for grades 6-8. The district has partnered with Littera Tutoring to provide a virtual one-on-one ELA tutoring experience for our students in grades 1-5 with a planned start date in January. These programs are by invitation only and students are evaluated throughout the year for exit and entry.

Our one on one virtual summer tutoring program proved to be successful for students who attended with consistency, and we look forward to supporting students who meet the criteria with our After School Math and ELA Accelerate Programs.

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### Tech Department

#### Technical Update for Students and Parents

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



Our district is now entering its 6th year providing Chromebooks for our students. Chromebooks have proven to be a reliable and dependable resource, especially with its portability for in district and at home use requirements. One of the primary reasons for the Chromebook success is its simplicity and focus as a familiar Google Chrome web browser. This is especially beneficial in an educational environment where the vast majority of learning resources needed by students are web page accessible.

Google now also offers a free software product that enables home users to install Chromebook-like capability to old and unused home computers and laptops. Google CloudReady Home Edition (available at [neverware.com](http://neverware.com)) is a free download that transforms your old PC or Mac into a Chrome device. Setup requires a few technical prerequisite steps in which they walk you through. If you have a computer at home that you are no longer using, CloudReady Home may add some extra life into that old computer still laying around in the closet!

## Parent Academy Night – January 25, 2022



Dr. Hart and Ms. Sherry Krial (Supervisor of Professional Development) would like to invite you to join us for a virtual Parent Academy on Tuesday, January 25 at 6:00 p.m. The topic of conversation will be Digital Citizenship. For more information, please [click here](#).

### Energy Savings

Mr. Don Race, Facilities Manager



The Readington Twp. School District has a commitment to being an energy conscious and environmentally friendly organization. Along with the combined efforts of the district Green Team, whose members are made up of both district and community members, the district seeks not only to advance efficient building operations to reduce energy use and costs, but to develop a culture of energy consciousness. Through district policies and educational opportunities, students and staff learn practical and behavioral strategies for reducing energy consumption, and to raise awareness of the positive environmental impact of our efforts. The hope is that by leading by example, the district can instill lifelong habits for energy conservation.

Highlights from recent incentives, and energy savings improvements. In the 2018-19 school year, after Solar PV Systems were installed at

Holland Brook, Readington Middle, and Three Bridges Schools, a new energy baseline was established as a comparison tool for district energy performance moving forward. In March 2020, just as the district was shutting down due to the global pandemic, Whitehouse and Three Bridges schools qualified for a NJ Clean Energy Direct Install program that helped fund the installation of new LED lighting throughout both schools. The program also replaced some aging rooftop HVAC units at both schools as well.

With the addition of the solar panels, energy data baselines, facility improvements, and behavioral awareness, the district continues to reduce energy use and avoid costs. The chart below summarizes energy use reductions and avoided costs from the 2020-2021 school year. The district continues to monitor district energy use and engage in energy reduction strategies.

### Energy Savings Progress Summary Report – Year 2 (July 2020-June 2021)

| Facility                 | % Change Electric | % Change Nat Gas | % Change Total Energy (BTU) | % Change Electric Demand | Avoided Cost     |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Holland Brook School     | -7%               | -1%              | -3%                         | -6%                      | \$ 11,455        |
| Readington Middle School | -8%               | 0%               | -4%                         | -13%                     | \$ 24,460        |
| Three Bridges School     | -27%              | -3%              | -11%                        | -16%                     | \$ 14,406        |
| Whitehouse School        | -17%              | 6%               | -3%                         | -16%                     | \$ 10,302        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>       | <b>-12%</b>       | <b>0%</b>        | <b>-5%</b>                  | <b>-11%</b>              | <b>\$ 60,623</b> |

\*comparison to new 2018-2019 baseline

## Budget Spotlight: Business Office

Mr. Jason Bohm, Business Administrator  
Ms. Katie DeRiso, Assistant to the Business Administrator



Every year the Board of Education, Dr. Hart, and Mr. Jason Bohm plan and create the budget for the next school year. The creation and implementation of a strong, responsible budget allows the district to maintain the many programs our students have become accustomed to. Through the budget, the district is also able to maintain the buildings and grounds in a manner in which the community has come to expect.

### 2021-2022 Budget Highlights:

- The district was able to hire an additional full-time behaviorist and part-time ESL teacher.
- With the assistance of federal grant programs, the district was able to provide additional intervention services for COVID learning loss and mental health services.
- The district was able to enhance school security by placing a ballistic window film to all windows of each school building.
- The district was able to replace a large section of the roof at Holland Brook School and replace one set of gymnasium bleachers at Readington Middle School.

### Tentative open public sessions and budget topics for the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| February 8, 2022  | Curriculum/Staff Development, Pupil Services, and Technology           |
| February 22, 2022 | Facilities, Transportation, Administration, Personnel and Benefits     |
| March 15, 2022    | Presentation of the whole budget to the public with tentative approval |
| April 5, 2022     | Budget clarification   |
| April 26, 2022    | Budget hearing and final adoption of budget                            |

Please note: these dates can change and public notices will be posted in advance with start times. Please check the [district website](#) for updates.

All input and concerns about the budget can be heard during the February 8 and February 22 board meetings as well as the other dates listed above.

During the planning of the 2022-2023 school year budget there will be some challenges facing our district which include, as of the writing of this article, a need for enhanced technology needs for students and staff, facility upgrades to ensure both students and staff remain safe and healthy, along with increases in staff salaries and health insurance premiums. In addition, to these challenges, the district continues to be committed to providing our students with comprehensive and rigorous programs of study, with a complement of athletic and extra-curricular offerings.

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### Superintendent Coffee Chat – February 2, 2022



Please join Dr. Hart for our third Superintendent Coffee Chat of the 2021-2022 school year on Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. virtually via Google Meet. The topic of conversation will be the **2022-2023 Budget Preparations**. Please RSVP to: [rsvp@readington.k12.nj.us](mailto:rsvp@readington.k12.nj.us). For more information, please [click here](#).

## Special Education Spotlight

### Tips to Prepare for Your Child's Annual Review

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services



Annual review season is just around the corner. For many parents, this may cause stress and anxiety, but it shouldn't! An annual review is the time to celebrate your child's accomplishments and plan programming, services and goals to continue to support your child with meaningful progress and success in school.

#### **First, what is an annual review?**

The Annual Review meeting is one of the most important parts of the special education process. In this meeting, school staff and parents come together to discuss and review a student's IEP. They make sure the IEP meets the student's needs. Your role as a member of the IEP team is valuable from start to finish. Your child's teachers, special education providers, and schools may change. But you remain a constant in your child's life. You'll watch your child learn, stumble, adapt, and succeed.

The annual review is held to review your child's special education program at least once a year and to discuss the progress your child is making towards his/her IEP goals. During the meeting, parents and faculty members can discuss if your child has exceeded goals in some areas, met other criteria or fell short. With this information, new goals can be set for the following school year, accommodation and modifications can be determined and a program will be proposed.

Please know that parents don't need to wait for an annual review meeting if there is a problem. Parents can request an IEP meeting at any time. Some students may need more frequent IEP meetings. New challenges can come up all the time.

#### **How to prepare for an annual review meeting?**

You will receive an invitation to the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please reach out to the secretary to reschedule.

If you have any concerns about your child's progress or programming and /or questions, please send an email to the case manager prior to the meeting so that the team may be prepared for additional information that they may need to obtain, and they include your concerns in the IEP.

If you had private evaluations done and wish to share them with the IEP team, please provide copies prior to the meeting so the team may review the reports and be prepared to discuss

Make a list of questions that you want to ask before you go into the meeting.

Consider creating an IEP binder that will file each year's IEPs, progress reports, report cards and evaluations. This will allow you to look at your child's progress over time, and look back at any changes to his/her educational needs, or his/her IEP. You will be able to easily refer to the location of your documents when you need to review or share any relevant paperwork at future meetings or any other time.

### **What to expect during the annual review meeting?**

Every child with an IEP must meet annually with his/her IEP team to review progress, and make plans for the next school year. At the annual review your child's case manager will be present, along with a special education teacher and general education teacher. Your child's related service staff will also be present. You will hear from each member as to the progress your child has made towards his annual goals, areas of strengths and areas that need continued support. You, as a parent will also have an opportunity to share.

At annual review meetings, your child's case manager will have the IEP team members introduce themselves and explain their roles in your child's programs. You will hear from each member as to the progress your child has made towards his annual goals, areas of strengths and areas that need continued support.

Parents also have the opportunity to share and ask questions. Once everyone shares the child's present levels, areas of strengths, areas in need of improvement, the accommodations and/or modifications the child requires to be successful, the IEP team will propose a program for your child.

It is important for you to understand the recommendations being made to support your child. If you don't understand how or why a recommendation is selected, ask for clarification. If a team member uses an acronym that you are unfamiliar with, ask for clarification. If you don't understand something, ask/and or discuss it until you feel confident with the recommendation and plan for your child.

At the end of the meeting, you may sign the IEP if you are in agreement with the plan or you may take the IEP home and review it. If you find that you have questions or need clarification on any part of the plan, contact your child's case manager to discuss. Often questions and concerns can be easily solved through a conversation, however a follow-up IEP meeting can always be scheduled to resolve any concerns and questions.

Although IEP meetings and special education in general may sometimes feel overwhelming and stressful, you are not alone in this journey! We have a phenomenal team of special educators, child study team members, behaviorists, speech specialists, occupational and physical therapists here to support and guide your child and you.

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### **Special Education Parent Advisory Group Meeting – January 20, 2022**

Please join Ms. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services, and guest speaker, Ms. Susan Freedman of NJ Children's System of Care, for our next Special Education Parent Advisory Group Meeting (SEPAG) on Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. virtually via Google Meet. The topic of conversation will be "Programs & Services for Children with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities". For more information, please [click here](#).

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***"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those that prepare for it today" – Malcom X***

## Building Spotlight: Whitehouse School

Dr. Ann DeRosa, Principal



This year, Whitehouse School launched its annual thematic unit by celebrating an author who was essentially born in the same year as the school! 1916 was a special year in Readington with implications that students would learn about more than 100 years later. It was the birth year of famous children's author, Beverly Cleary. In addition, it was the year that the Readington Board of Education authorized the building of a new school on the corner of Whitehouse Avenue. According to a Courier-News article from April 1916, the land would be purchased for \$5,000 and the architects planned for a five-room structure. Linking learning and knowing about local history can serve to enrich the present-day experience for the students who report to the now 75,000 square foot structure on Whitehouse Avenue each morning!

As for more recent school traditions, each year, dating back to 2005, Whitehouse School has joined together to learn and grow as a school community while embarking on an annual thematic unit. The topic is different each year. It is often an opportunity for the whole school to read the same novel. Teachers work with the current district curricula to find areas that they can easily connect to the book or theme. Students then complete assignments such as writing pieces, creative projects and/or artistic performances centered on the key topics that are identified. During every unit, as students and staff read the novel, they are on the lookout for SEL concepts that align with Whitehouse School's core values. The goal is to build "character" by studying "characters".

In light of the recent passing of the great Beverly Cleary, students will be reading her first work, *Henry Huggins*, published in 1950, and another book in the series about Henry's dog entitled, *Ribsy*. The school is working with The Seeing Eye organization, which supports the Partnerships goal outlined in the District's 5-Year Strategic Plan. In collaboration with this philanthropic organization, and under the leadership of special education teacher, Ms. Deanna Schwaiger, students will raise funds to benefit service dogs. It is a way for the children to help others and make a real-world connection inspired by the loveable, helpful, fictitious pooch, Ribsy!

Finally, as a culminating event, preparations for a homegrown performance are underway based on a musical script written and directed by Dr. Emily Bengels in her role as the advisor of the WHS Grade 3 Drama Club. Students were learning their lines and songs "in person". In recent days, due to COVID safety concerns, plans have shifted for the club to pivot to a virtual format. Dr. Bengels has created a Google Classroom and children have been practicing the script through audio clips that she has recorded for each part in the play. She will also hold virtual script-reading meetings. An in-house spring performance for students by students is planned.

Beverly Cleary is most famous for her *Ramona the Pest* book series, which was chosen as the theme about 10 years ago. Some additional annual thematic units studied at WHS in the past have included, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Little House on the Prairie*, *Madeline*, & *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Please see the Courier News Article from 1916 and a photo of the WHS Drama Club below:

**Arranging For New School**

Peter La Tourette, Augustus C. Durling and Andrew H. Seals, a committee appointed by the Board of Education, of Readington township, to arrange for the construction of a central school here, has selected two acres of land on the corner of Whitehouse avenue as a possible site for the proposed new structure for East Whitehouse and Whitehouse Station. It is midway between the two towns and is located on the farm of the late John H. Burdette. It can be purchased for \$5,000. Architects are busy preparing plans for a five-room structure, which are to be submitted next Monday. At the meeting of the board Saturday, April 29, a date will be set to give the taxpayers a chance to vote on the proposition.



Pictured here: Dr. Bengels practices lines with a small subset of the 30 students who are participating in the WHS Grade 3 Drama Club.

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## **Governor's Educator of the Year Program Honorees / 2021-2022 School Year**

We are pleased to announce the Readington Township School District 2021-2022 Governor's Educator of the Year (GEOY) Program recipients. Each of our schools has recognized a Teacher and Educational Services Professional for this prestigious honor.

**Readington Middle School:** Lilien Drew/Mandarin Teacher

**Holland Brook School:** Tricia Noonan/Grade 4 Teacher - Beth Luque/Speech Specialist

**Three Bridges School:** Marisa Dotro/Special Education Teacher - Courtney D'Onofrio/Speech Specialist

**Whitehouse School:** Kristy Pieloch/Grade 1 Teacher – Katie Lynch/Nurse

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## **Mark Your Calendars**

### **Upcoming Events:**

- January 17 / Schools Closed – Martin Luther King Day
- January 20 / SEPAG Meeting
- January 25 / Parent Academy Night
- February 2 / Superintendent Coffee Chat
- February 21 / Schools Closed – Presidents Day
- February 24-25 / Kindergarten Registration



### **Upcoming BOE Meetings:**

January 18, February 8, and February 22