

# The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

## March 2020



# Message from the Superintendent

Dear Readington Families,

In recent weeks considerable conversation has revolved around child losses in our community and youth mental health. As a father and an educator, I too, share the concerns about how to best promote a healthy lifestyle and combat the mental health issues among youth. The Readington Township Public School District has taken steps to address these issues and continues to look into additional layers of support to promote the positive mental health of our students.

This year is the first year the district has employed a Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction who focuses primarily on social emotional learning (SEL). This position also works closely with school counselors and teachers in promoting the 5 competencies of SEL. Our district's strategic planning group developed a goal devoted to social awareness, including emotional and mental well-being. The Supervisor of SEL is a co-chair of this goal along with one of our school counselors. The health and school counseling curricula address areas of mental well-being. The district has plans to pilot curriculum materials in 8th grade that focus on mental health and suicide prevention. We look forward to analyzing the results of this pilot.

We remain committed to parent education. This year we hosted two Parent Academies to provide parents with information and resources. One focused on issues related to physical and mental health such as vaping and social emotional learning. The other was a viewing of *Screenagers: The Next Chapter*, which focused on depression and anxiety in the digital age.

Our journey is not over. The district remains committed to researching and reviewing additional services that can be provided to our students. A colleague reminded me of the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." It certainly does and this is a community effort. If you have any concerns about your child, please contact us. We are able to assist you in locating services and resources. We, as a community, are here to support our children.

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

Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanh

In Photo: Dr. Hart and Mason Quintard



## Curriculum Corner State Testing Tips for Parents



Under federal guidelines, each state is required to implement a testing program for grades three through eight. The statewide assessments for mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA), and science are the *New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA-Mathematics, NJSLA-ELA, and NJSLA-Science)*.

The website below offer practice tests for each grade level of the assessment should you wish to familiarize yourself with the kinds of items and format used for the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments.  
<https://nj.mypearsonsupport.com/practice-tests/>

As a parent, there are a number of ways you can support your child before and after taking the upcoming State Testing, as well as a number of ways you can support your child's learning habits on a daily basis that will help them be more prepared. The following are some helpful tips:

### On Test Day:

- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and eats a healthy breakfast
- Make sure your child is prepared
- Remain positive

### After the Test

- Talk with your child about how they felt about the test.
- Discuss their answers, thought processes, and feelings, you can gain further insight into what he or she is struggling with and excelling at and then help them prepare for the next day of testing.
- Talking about testing can also help your child process the experience and overcome any anxiety they might be having.

Please [click here](#) to view district testing dates.

## Readington Middle School – 2020 New Jersey Green Ribbon School

Congratulations! Readington Middle School has been selected as a **2020 New Jersey Green Ribbon School**.

We are proud to announce that Readington Middle School has been selected as a 2020 New Jersey Green Ribbon School. Readington Middle School has worked hard in the following areas to receive this recognition:

- Nearly 30% of the school’s energy is obtained from rooftop solar panels and ground arrays. Energy usage and savings data is displayed outside of the cafeteria.
- We have also reduced the amount of printing and copying of paper due to our 1.1 Chromebook initiative which allows students and staff to download, share, and submit work electronically.
- The curriculum aligns courses with the Education of Sustainability standards that bolster non-fiction reading.
- The school supports a coordinated health and nutrition program where recommendations for healthier living have resulted in a salad bar, new menu items, and health education outreach.
- Each grade level embodies a unique theme: grade 6 “Dare to Dream”; grade 7 “Believe You Can”; and grade 8 “Achieve It”.
- All RMS students work to develop ways to reduce waste, support responsible consumption and production, promote good health and well-being, and build in-and out-of-school partnerships.

Happy people, healthy environment, and inspired learning and action for all! At RMS, vision and accountability for a sustainable future are truly a community effort.



**Photo #1**



**Photo #2**



**Photo #3**

**Photo #1 – Indoor Farm to Table: Students harvest fresh leafy greens from Indoor Aeroponic Vertical Garden**

Students in photo (left to right): Colin Prior, Max Qi, Jeremiah Markowitz, Joey Delli Santi, Jason Horner

**Photo #2 – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Global Goals Green Team Members Conduct Waste Audit in Cafeteria**

Students in photo (left to right): Toni Kaese, Martael Hoffman, Maya Hernandez, Christopher Serrao, Rooney Rasare, Amelia Watson, Eddie Lou, Axel Caballero-Aparcio, Dylan Gale, Andrew Leibowitz, Braden Galloway

**Photo #3 – Outdoor vs. Indoor Food Production Comparison: Students prepare outdoor raised garden beds**

Students in photo (left to right): Angelina Tenore, Bronwyn Downey, Katherine John, Sophia Milicevic, Eva Graziano

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***“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” - Albert Einstein***



## Governor Educator of the Year Program Honorees / 2019-2020 School Year

We are pleased to announce the Readington Township School District 2019-2020 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:** Bruno Somma/Math Teacher and Adam Connelly/School Counselor

**Holland Brook School:** Michael Roosen/Special Education Teacher and Nicole Maraventano/Literacy Coach

**Whitehouse School:** Jennifer Kostelansky/Kindergarten Teacher and Sara Grzenda/School Psychologist

**Three Bridges School:** Christine Lewis/Grade 3 Teacher and Stephanie Armstrong/School Nurse

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## Screenagers NEXT CHAPTER: Building Skills for Stress Resilience

Shared by physician and filmmaker Dr. Delaney Ruston



The district recently hosted the screening of the film **Screenagers NEXT CHAPTER**. The following information was shared with those that attended this event.

- **Validate Feelings:** There is an art to validating our teens' feelings effectively. Work to tell them you see and appreciate the challenge of what they are feeling, and try not to follow it with statements such as, *"Oh don't worry, it will get better."*
- **Empower Problem Solvers:** Rather than jump in to try and fix their problems, ask, *"Do you have any solutions in mind?"* or *"Let me know if you want any input from me."*
- **Talk About Your Emotions:** Let them know about how you work to handle stress and other difficult emotions. It is not about burdening them but sharing feelings appropriately.
- **Support with Resources:** If your teen is systematically avoiding the social time, school work and other activities due to anxious and/or sad feelings, get support and find resources for help on our website. This includes learning what you can do at home, such as opposite action, exposure interventions, and behavioral activation.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends 6– 12-year-olds get 9-12 hours of sleep a night, and 13– 18 year-olds get 8–10 hours a night. Keeping phones and other devices out of their room at night is important. For teens with devices in their bedrooms, 36% report that they wake up and check it at least once a night. Another study shows that just having a phone (or other mobile devices in the bedroom) negatively impacts sleep duration and quality even if teens report not checking them.
- **Teach the 3 Ex's of Worry:** This is a great skill for both youth and adults regarding everyday worry. Author Lynn Lyon teaches the 3 Ex's strategy.
  1. **"Expect"** -recognize that worry often arises and practice accepting it;
  2. **"Externalize"** -pull it out and personify it, *"Hello worry"*;
  3. **"Experiment"** -do the opposite of what the worry demands, -it demands attention. Instead, don't get into a discussion with it, but pivot into other activities or thoughts. This takes practice.
- **Prioritizing Face-to-Face Time:** Find more ways teens can have screen-free time with peers, younger kids, and adults of all ages. Examples include jobs, getting to know their friend's parents, having neighbors for dinner.

## Building Spotlight: Holland Brook School

Submitted by Principal, Mr. Paul Nigro



**The Great Kindness Challenge (GKC)** is a proactive and positive bullying prevention initiative that improves school climate and increases student engagement. **The Great Kindness Challenge** is a one-week event devoted to performing as many intentional acts of kindness as possible. The theme **Kindness Matters** gives students new ways to show kindness, not only this week but always.

During the week of January 27, Holland Brook School participated in **The Great Kindness Challenge**. The day kicked-off with a student leadership club led assembly and continued all week with daily spirit themes. Together with schools from around the world, HBS highlighted the importance of kindness and encouraged students to complete **The Great Kindness Challenge**. Parents were invited to participate as well by using **The Kindness Challenge Family Edition**. Click this link for more information on the [Family Checklist](#).

A key component of the challenge was to raise donations through **Kind Coins for Mexico**. Students were invited to contribute to this international fundraiser by bringing in coins to help build a new

school in Mexico. [Click Here](#) for a letter describing how students were encouraged to "earn" the money for their donations through acts of service at home.

To promote school spirit, students were asked to participate in a "spirit themed" week. The events were as follows:

- **Monday, 1/27 - Wear Bright Colors - "Shine Bright with Kindness"**
- **Tuesday, 1/28 - Wear a Hat - "Hats Off for Kindness"**
- **Wednesday, 1/29 - Wear Crazy Hair - "Crazy for Kindness"**
- **Thursday, 1/30 - Wear Pajamas - "Dream of a World of Kindness"**
- **Friday, 1/31 - Wear Bobcat Spirit Wear or School Colors - "Kindness the Bobcat Way"**

Students have until March 1 to collect spare change at home or in their neighborhoods to support kids in Mexico. Thank you for helping create a culture of kindness and compassion in our community and beyond! For more information, please visit [www.greatkindnesschallenge.org](http://www.greatkindnesschallenge.org)

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**Photo #1 HBS Hats Off for Kindness Day/ In photo (left to right):** Sam Gauvin, Thomas Zenz, Mr. Paul Nigro, Antonella Falzarano, Shaelyn Vandermeide, Abigail Sharon, and Chase Sherrod.

**Photo #2 Crazy for Kindness Day / In photo (left to right):** Luke Del Corso, Reagan O'Connell, Sadie Johnston, Myia Sanz, Laci Sova, Jackie Solimani, Ada Jackson, Sofia Trabilcy.



Photo #1



Photo #2

## Harvest of Love: Whitehouse School

Whitehouse School hosted a Harvest of Love dessert party for the Rutgers Master Gardeners. The staff wanted to honor this amazing group of volunteers for all that they do to enrich the lives of our students through the school-wide garden project. Each Master Gardener received a small Valentine's Day gift, and a package of homemade cookies baked by Whitehouse School teachers!



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## Coming Up: School Climate Survey

The Readington Township Public School District seeks input from parents, teachers, and students regarding the climate and culture of our schools. The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into the overall climate of our schools in an effort to strengthen our district. The New Jersey Department of Education supports

school surveys and has reported the benefits of using surveys to inform school improvement. This important survey will be administered for a period beginning on March 23 and will remain open until April 3. Please look for a formal notification from the district via *Genesis* in the coming weeks.



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## New and Improved!

Please check out the new School Counseling websites for [HBS](#) and [RMS](#). Visit our website and navigate to view the counseling websites.

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## Mark Your Calendars

### Upcoming Events:

- **March 8** / Daylight Saving Time / Spring Clocks Forward
- **March 24** / HSA Dine Around
- **April 1** / Superintendent Coffee Chat
- **April 10-17** / Spring Recess-Schools Closed
- **May 4-8** / Teacher Appreciation Week
- **May 18** / Kindergarten Orientation 2020-2021
- **May 25** / Memorial Day-Schools Closed

### Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- **March 17**
- **April 7, 28**
- **May 5, 19**



\*Also attached is the district [calendar for the 2020-2021](#) school year\*