

The Superintendent Sentinel | PARENT NEWSLETTER

October 2021



Message from the Superintendent

Greetings parents of Readington!

I love the month of October! The warm days and cool nights remind me that we are well into a brand new school year. As we enter the middle of October I want to take a moment to thank all of our parents, students, and staff for their herculean efforts in getting this school year underway. Our students have been most resilient in the changing landscape of this year but it's clear they are thrilled to be back in school full-time. Our teachers have created a climate that is warm and safe for students to thrive. They continue to work on getting students reacquainted with classroom and school routines.

There is continued evidence of a return to normalcy (or as close to normal as possible). I am thrilled to hear the hum of classroom discussions and engagement, the whistle blows at after-school sports practices, and the return of volunteers, including the HSA to school-sponsored events. I look forward to a rewarding year where we will move toward our strategic goals and live our mission of empowering 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 year will certainly be one in which we can watch children grow in ways that will live up to our mission.

(In Photo: Dr. Hart with HBS Mrs. Riess/Grade 5 Class – Enjoying Time Outside)



Dr. Jonathan Hart / 908-534-2897
Follow me on twitter @hartjonathanr

School Staffing Shortages and Job Fair

The country has been faced with a labor shortage. School districts across the nation are desperate for school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and substitute teachers. Our district is no exception. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Association for Pupil Transportation, the National Education Association, and Education Week, the job opening rates for state and local education has increased 168% between July 2020 and July 2021. The shortage of certain staff has presented challenges for our district but we have developed plans in hopes of recruiting staff.

The district is hosting a Substitute Job Fair on Thursday, October 28. If you are interested in becoming a substitute (teacher, paraprofessional, secretary, or nurse), please join us. For more information, please [click here](#). We are hiring School Bus Drivers and will be conducting interviews at the Substitute Job Fair. To set up an appointment or for additional information, please call 908-534-2896.

“Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think” – Albert Einstein

Curriculum Corner

Back to School Success

Together, Inquire and Inspire



Dr. Stacey Brown, Supervisor of Humanities, Ms. Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science & Technology,
and Ms. Sherry Krial, Supervisor of Professional Development/Tech+

You are your child's first teacher. Here are some helpful tips to continue their successful transition to the new school year.

- **Be organized.** Consider organizing your child's backpack the night before. Also, laying out clothes, collecting sports equipment and instruments, and packing lunch may make for a more peaceful morning.
- **Get plenty of rest.** Set and enforce regular weekday or weekend bedtimes. Establish regular bedtime routines and set an alarm or notification 30 minutes before bedtime. Remove tech devices from your child's bedrooms to focus them on sleeping.
- **Eat a good breakfast.** Students learn best when they are energized and can fully focus on their school work. Even if your child isn't interested in breakfast first thing in the morning, something small and healthy to eat will give them the energy they need until lunch time.
- **Engage in open communication with your child's teacher.** Communicate early and often. You and your child's teacher have the same goal. You both want your child to have a positive, successful school year.
- **Understand your child's curriculum.** All district curricula are posted on the district website. Familiarize yourself with the content so you can talk to your child about what they learn each day.
- **Devise a plan for homework.** Find a quiet place for homework, such as a "homework station." Remove distractions like TVs and video game consoles in the homework area. Help your child to prioritize their assignments by making to-do lists with deadlines. Give your child a short break after each assignment they finish.

Parents know their children best and have the privilege of setting the tone for the school day. This is an ideal time for schools and families to support each other and strengthen the school home connection.

Tech Department

New School Year - Tech Tips for Parents

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



- For helpful technology tips and support resources, please visit our [Tech@Home](#) portal.
- Chromebook tip to help increase performance, close unused TABS and restart the device periodically. See Chromebook Troubleshooting tips for more details [HERE](#).
- Kindergarten iPad support and how to use resources can be located [HERE](#)
- Requests for technical support can be entered by going to: rtps.incidentiq.com You can login with your Google [@readington.k12.nj.us](#) district account.
- For Genesis login or access issues, please email us at: genesis@readington.k12.nj.us
- For general technical inquiries or any other issues you can email our team at: techsupport@readington.k12.nj.us
- We will be conducting a test of our school messenger notification system on Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Please expect a test phone call and text message.



Aavidum – Mental Health Curriculum

Mr. Anthony Tumolo, Supervisor of SEL and Special Projects



Readington continues its commitment to the social and emotional wellness of our students, staff and members of our community. One of the district’s strategic goals is to cultivate social awareness throughout our district family. The goal reads,

“Our learners will feel connected, valued, and secure in digital and non-digital learning environments cultivated by a shared sense of community. 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.”

A committee of expert district professionals in their field of education was assembled including administrators, school counselors, and teachers to map out actionable steps to achieve this lofty, but important goal. Together, we identified that the mental wellness of our students is a critical piece to this vision. So we began searching possible resources that would support the programs we already have instituted in our schools through our current Health and counseling curricula to address mental health.

A staff member from RMS reached out and shared that her son’s school created an “Aavidum” Club. After doing some digging into the program I came to discover that this was more than just a club. It was a school-wide commitment to the mental wellness of all students. Here is an excerpt from www.aavidum.com to provide some context. ***“Aavidum stands for, “I got your back.” This was created by a group of students after they lost a classmate to suicide. What started in one tiny school in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania has now become a nationwide movement.”***

Please visit this website for further information on the organization and the program’s contents. All materials are free and downloadable, but can only be accessed by registering.

After sharing this information with our school counselors, administrators and members of our school board and after hours of discussion, I am excited to announce the implementation of two mental health curricula for this school year: **Aavidum for students in grade 6-8 (To be launched in October)** **Little Aavidum for students in grades K-5 (To be launched in January and February)**

The Aavidum Program is designed to be co-taught by the Physical Education/Health Teacher along with the School Counselor. Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science and Technology, and I collaborated to make sure the lessons outlined in this free program are in alignment with the current Health standards identified by the New Jersey Department of Education. Our Physical Education/Health Teachers and School Counselors are working closely together to coordinate and schedule the implementation of the Aavidum Program. Furthermore, an Aavidum Club has been established at Readington Middle School to support the amazing work taking place in our classrooms.

In conclusion, the intention behind this action step is to spread the word to every student that they are not alone and we always have each other’s backs here in Readington. Through these lessons, I hope that our students will feel empowered by understanding that it is ok and necessary to talk about mental health. The brave spaces that will be created by our incredible staff under the supervision of our expert school counselors, will hopefully provide students and adults the knowledge and language needed to talk about this complex, often uncomfortable, yet critically important topic that will stay with them for their entire lives.



Special Education Spotlight

Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) - What is SEPAG?

Mrs. Staci Beegle, Director of Pupil Services

Follow SEPAG on Facebook @ReadingtonTownshipSEPAG

A Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) is a district level, parent driven group. The New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education tells us that “each district’s Board of Education shall ensure that a special education advisory group is in place in the district to provide input to the districts on issues concerning students with disabilities.” While we have always hosted parent meetings, this group goes above and beyond. SEPAG is an independent volunteer group that works

collaboratively with the Readington Township Pupil Services Department. SEPAG is intended for anyone that has an interest in special education or has a child with an IEP that resides in Readington Township. Partnerships are formed by creating opportunities for parents to share information, network with other parents trying to handle similar situations and learn from each other’s advice, questions and experiences in a safe sharing environment. Some topics that SEPAG may address at meetings include:

- Disability awareness: ADD/ADHD, ASD, Down Syndrome, Physical Disability, Developmental Disability, Learning Disability
- Information on IEPs and 504s
- Related services: speech, occupational therapy, social skills, etc.
- Advocating for yourself and your family
- Community resources
- Reinforcing study skills at home
- Supporting students on the Autism Spectrum
- Addressing Anxiety and Depression
- Extended School Year (ESY)
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Effective Communication with Teachers
- IDEA: Understanding the Principles of Special Education
- Effects of Executive Functioning on Learning
- Social Emotional Learning
- Impact of COVID-19 on Learning

I welcome you to join Jessica March, the parent leader of SEPAG and me, the district liaison to SEPAG, to our first SEPAG meeting of the 2021-2022 school year on October 21st at 6:30 PM. The first meeting will be held virtually. A link to the meeting will be posted on the district website along with an agenda. I believe together we can enhance the experience and make a positive difference in strengthening our special

education programs and services for our students with disabilities and their families. I am committed to fostering a collaborative partnership with SEPAG and creating a unified network of information and support for our students, families and teachers. Please complete the following survey prior to October 18th. The survey results will be shared at the meeting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SEPAG>

To join the Readington Township School District SEPAG please email:
readingtontownshipsepag@gmail.com



Building Spotlight: Holland Brook School

Mr. Paul Nigro, Principal

Welcome to all parents! The school year is off to a great start. I am so happy that we are back to full days with all students attending. The teachers at Holland Brook School (HBS) continue to impress me with their creativity, enthusiasm and knowledge. They care for each student and work hard to help them meet with success. This is truly a terrific school.

One focus of the strategic plan of the Readington School District is inquisitive learning. The staff of HBS has embraced this important concept. Your children are being challenged to identify, analyze and solve problems individually and collaboratively. Not only does this happen in their academic courses, but also in our Discovery Lab that they attend each week. This year I increased the amount of time students have in this class led by Dr. McGibbon. I also have their homeroom teacher co-teaching with her.

Mrs. Pauley, our school counselor, continues to provide your children with the support they

need emotionally. The transition from primary to secondary schools is challenging. Learning how to manage the academic and social stresses at this age is a primary concern of our staff. We work on these challenges with our students during their weekly SEL lessons.

I am eagerly anticipating the return of our annual Pumpkin Bash in October. The event will be held outside at our large outdoor classroom. Thanks to our HSA for this and future fun events they sponsor for your children.

Walking the hallways, listening to the lessons taking place in the classrooms, is one of the joys I experience daily. I have been in education for twenty-nine years in five different schools. I can confidently say that this is the best school, with the best staff, that I have ever had the pleasure to work with. Please know as a parent that your child is in a great place to learn. Holland Brook is a special school. I am proud to be a part of it.

Below are some photos of the HBS Discovery Lab in action:



Mark Your Calendars

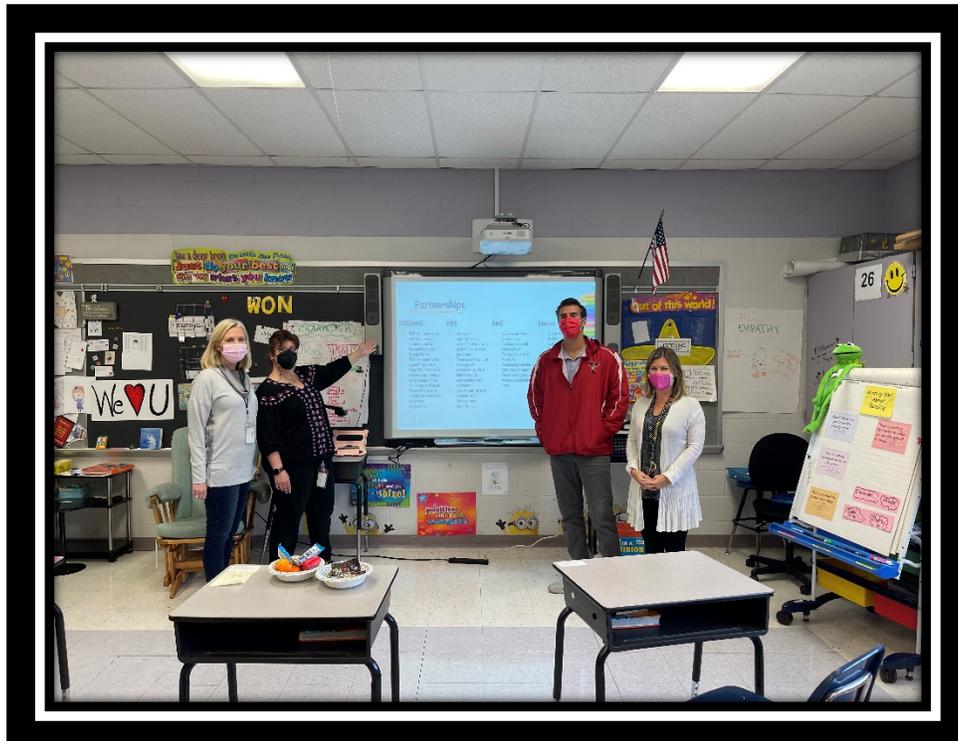
Upcoming Events:

- October 26 / Parent Academy Night
- October 29 / Halloween Parades (TBS/WHS/HBS)
- November 1-3 / Parent-Teacher Conferences
- November 4-5 / Schools Closed - NJEA Convention
- November 18 / SEL Parent Night
- November 24 / Early Dismissal – Thanksgiving Recess
- December 1 / Superintendent Coffee Chat
- December 23 / Early Dismissal Day – Winter Recess
- December 24-January 2 / Winter Recess



Upcoming BOE Meetings:

- November 9, December 14, and January 4, 2022



October 11 In-Service Day / Strategic Planning Partnerships Session
In Photo (left to right): Tiffany Barca, Alissa Buelow, Will Daly, and Jodi Rehrig

***“The home is the child’s first school, the parent is the child’s first teacher,
and reading is the child’s first subject” – Barbara Bush***
