



Flemington-Raritan School District Parent Newsletter



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DECEMBER GREETINGS

During the holidays my family gathers together to enjoy many traditional holiday celebrations. We are fortunate to be able to celebrate holiday traditions passed down from one generation to the other. From young cousins to elderly grandparents, we all spend one morning together cutting, filling, and folding pasta dough to make homemade ravioli; a tradition set in place by my husband's mother and her mother, an immigrant to the United States from Sicily in the early 1900s. Later in the evening family members exchange gifts and play games together, usually a board game or card game that I've never heard of before brought by one of the 24 grandchildren. Last year it was a card game called Ultimate Werewolf. (I lost.) The seating at the holiday table continues to grow each year, a blessing we are fortunate to be thankful for every year. As we enjoy the holidays this month please accept my warmest wishes for a terrific December and a happy, healthy holiday season.



SUPERINTENDENT ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

At the Superintendent's Roundtable at Francis A. Desmares School on December 10th, parents from Reading-Fleming Intermediate School and Francis A Desmares School were present. Participants had a discussion about the district's indoor air quality, school and campus security, and the student calendar. Following these topics the session moved to an open forum format with the following topics discussed:

√ Parents were interested in school security. We talked about the procedures in place for visitors in the building and the security drills that happen on a regular basis.

√ A parent, referring to Hunterdon County and specifically to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District, shared, "It feels magical out here."

√ A conversation about homework brought opinions about the developmentally appropriate amount of homework and recommendations by researchers. I wrote about homework in the September Parent Newsletter in a section titled, *Homework Survival Tips for Parents*. You can find that article [here](#). Our ultimate goal for homework should be to encourage self-motivation, self-discipline, responsibility, and a love of learning. From the September issue I remind readers, "Above



all, DO check with your child's teachers if you sense that your child is having a difficult time with homework, learning concepts, etc. They appreciate and value your input."

√ The group also talked about the amount of recess that children receive in school and Governor Murphy's mandatory requirement for recess which will go into effect in 2019-2020. This law mandates a daily 20-minute recess period for students in kindergarten through grade five. You can read more about that law [here](#). The act supplements Chapter 35 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes and shares that the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the United States Department of Education, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommend that school-aged children should participated in at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

The Superintendent Roundtable discussions are an open forum for community discussion on topics that are on the minds of our community members. At the January Superintendent Roundtable I am hopeful to talk a bit about school security and STEM, otherwise known in the education world as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The session focuses on the interests of those in attendance, but I always have a few topics of interest I am willing to share with those that attend. Dates alternate between school locations and evening and morning times in order to try to accommodate community member's schedules.

Check the district website [here](#) to register for January's Superintendent Roundtable Discussion. January's session will be held at Robert Hunter in the library on Tuesday, January 15th from 9:30 until 11 a.m. I hope to see many of you there!

WINTER IS HERE AND JACK FROST HAS ALREADY FLEXED HIS MUSCLES!

If Thursday, November 15 and Friday, November 16 are any indication of the winter weather we are to expect this winter we could be headed into quite the wintery season! According to the Farmers' Almanac, the New Jersey Winter of 2019 is forecasted to be quite a doozy! See the article [here](#) from the Patch website. Reporters shared that New Jersey will endure blustery and bitter winds, as well as widespread snow showers. The Farmers' Almanac reports for New Jersey colder than normal temperatures, more snowfall than normal, bitter cold, winds and snow from mid-February, and cold to keep its grip on the region after the official start of spring.





Image credit given to <https://patch.com/new-jersey>

However, don't go out and buy a snow blower quite yet because the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration's Climate Prediction Center released its annual winter outlook and it claims we'll see higher temperatures for most of the United States, included the northeast. See that link [here](#). The authors of the weather article in Country Living remind readers that weather predictions are just that—predictions—and that means that they are not going to be 100% accurate. As the writers say, take all this weather forecasting with a grain of salt—and make sure to stock up on gloves and hats just in case.

An Important Calendar Reminder:

We have used all three of our built-in snow days for this calendar year; two in September and one on Friday, November 16. It will be recommended to the Board of Education to follow the previously-approved district calendar which designated three contingency snow days. These snow days were built into the calendar. If more than three days are needed, the year will be extended as follows: 4/26, 4/25, 4/24, 4/23, 4/22. These days are aligned with Spring Break. This means that for every additional snow day needed one day will be subtracted from the Spring Break recess. While family time is important we are hopeful our students are present at school as often as they are healthy.

HUNTERDON COUNTY SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT

Student and staff safety is a top priority for our district. We have two district security officers, Mr. Peter Sibilia, Vice Principal at J.P. Case Middle School, and Mr. Jesse Lockett, Vice Principal at Copper Hill Elementary School. During the month of November our district led the first Hunterdon County School Safety Summit. The summit was held on November 28, 2018 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at J.P. Case Middle School. Superintendents (K-16), school security personnel, building administrators, board of education members, & police and emergency services professionals joined us to listen to featured guest speakers. They were Lt. Kevin Burd from the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, and Thomas Gambino, Ed.D., and Mr. Robert Sensi, both from the New Jersey Department of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning. Opening remarks were made by Anthony P. Kearns, III, Hunterdon County Prosecutor. We listened as the



presenters shared emergency preparation recommendations for districts in the event of a serious emergency, such as in the case of a school shooting or unexpected tragedy. It was a somber evening with discussion revolving around a very tough topic but one that is absolutely necessary to discuss so that we are prepared for any crisis we may face. Student and staff safety, along with campus security, is a top priority for the district. I continue to meet regularly with both Mr. Lockett and Mr. Sibilia to plan, prepare, collaborate, and execute steps for top school security.

RFIS VETERAN'S DAY ASSEMBLY

Reading-Fleming Intermediate School hosted their annual Veteran's Assembly to honor military veterans' service, sacrifice, and experiences. This year the assembly honored two district teachers who have served in the military. They are J.P. Case Middle School Language Arts Teacher Misti Meyer, who served in the Marine Corps, and Reading-Fleming Intermediate School 5th-Grade Teacher Stacey Cagenello, who served as a captain in the United States Army. They are pictured with RFIS Art Teacher Leigh Kermizian-Caldwell and RFIS Music Teacher Susie Guckin.



INDOOR AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Communication regarding indoor air quality was shared with the Reading-Fleming Intermediate School community on November 29, 2018. In this letter I shared with the RFIS community that the moisture problems in the basement at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School were resolved. The remediation and clean-up plan concluded during the last week of November. The basement at RFIS has been completely remediated and cleared for staff and students. Lab reports are available online for your review. These reports are written for an interpretation by an occupational and environmental analysis review, not for the general public. I share them with you in effort of clear transparency, not to cause confusion. The district continues to be proactive in our efforts to continue to maintain a healthy indoor air quality environment for our staff and students. At the September 11 Board of Education meeting I provided to the Board of Education and members of the audience a report on the Indoor Air Quality Remediation Effort. The Board of Education presentation can be found at the link [here](#). I encourage you to take a look at the slides and information. I provided a calendar to demonstrate a timeline and photos to help demonstrate the efforts the district has taken to ensure health and safety.

SUPERINTENDENT'S LUNCH BUNCH

I so enjoyed having lunch with RFIS students in November. We talked about Thanksgiving plans, homework, their love for their school and what they enjoy most about being students. I look forward to my next lunch bunch, which will be held at J.P. Case later this month.

