



Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parent and Community Newsletter

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Hello, Parents and Flemington-Raritan Community!

We are nearly eight weeks into the school year and we have so much to celebrate! Our students are engaged in important and meaningful learning each day with thoughtful and wise educators. The marvelous co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that enrich our students' school experiences are back in full force. From PTO family activities and after-school clubs to the upcoming start of winter sports, there's something for everyone and many ways for students to meet friends and explore new interests. Our district's monthly activity calendar, [linked here](#), is filled with opportunities to join members of the community in unique happenings and school festivities. Thank you for your continued trust and support in our schools. We value our partnership and are a stronger learning community because of you.

SEEKING SUBSTITUTES: WE NEED YOU!



Among the shortages that have been reported in the local and national news, we'd like to add substitute teachers to the list. We are in desperate need for substitute teachers at all schools. There are two pathways that lead to substitute certification:

Pathway #1

- Completion of 60 semester-hour credits;
- Credits must be completed at an accredited college or university at the time of application;
- Credential is valid for five (5) years from the date of issuance.

Pathway #2

- Completion of 30 semester-hour credits;
- Credits must be completed at an accredited institution of higher education at the time of application;
- Applicant must be enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education at the time of application;

- Applicant must be at least 20 years of age;
- Credential pathway is available until June 30, 2023;
- Credential is valid for five (5) years from the date of issuance.

We encourage parents and family members who meet either criteria and who have a desire to work in an exciting school environment to apply to be a substitute teacher. College students who will be home in December and January are also eligible to become substitutes. They should apply now, however, and not wait until the fall semester ends as the application process takes several weeks.

The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District contracts with a company called Frontline for various human resources platforms, including staff recruitment and hiring. To apply to be a substitute employee in our district, click [here](#). To learn more about substitute certification, please visit this New Jersey Department of Education website: <https://nj.gov/education/license/sub>. Those that are interested can also contact Mrs. Christine Karpi at ckarpi@frsd.k12.nj.us. Many of our current teachers and administrators began their careers as substitute teachers. It's a great way to get your foot in the door to begin a tenure-track teaching position. Join us!

INSTAGRAM AND TEEN GIRLS

A review of an article originally posted in the New York Times and later featured in the Marshall Memo, Issue #907, October 18, 2021)



In this *New York Times* article, Lindsay Crouse (Opinion) reports on recent *Wall Street Journal* revelations of Facebook's internal research on the impact of their Instagram app. According to the Facebook survey, "Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse." Here's an example of how this plays out with a 13-year-old girl. She's beginning to feel anxious about her appearance; she follows some diet influencers on Instagram and the algorithm suggests more-extreme dieting accounts; she follows more eating-disorder content, gets caught up in a feedback cycle of hating her body, and becomes increasingly depressed.

"Anybody who has ever spent time as a teenage girl is unlikely to find any of these revelations particularly surprising," says Crouse. "For girls in America, taking in content that seems intended to make you hate your body is an

adolescent rite of passage.” For previous generations, it was magazines with images of impossibly thin models. “If magazines left girls with the distinct impression that our bodies and faces were being constantly appraised, assessed, and compared, that impression was confirmed by our experiences in the world,” says Crouse. “The body positivity movement may have helped, but girls still internalize the message that part of their success in life will rest upon their ability to be admired for their appearance.”

Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms turbocharge what magazines did in a new medium. (The idea for Facebook was cooked up in Mark Zuckerberg’s Harvard dorm room, where he had friends rate female classmates on how “hot” they were.) Instagram’s message to young women, says Crouse, goes something like this: “You are riddled with flaws and imperfections. We will tell you what to buy, and what to do, to fix yourself.” Images of celebrities, peers, and girls themselves get rated with “likes” and comments in a gamified environment not unlike a high-school cafeteria. And hundreds of billions of advertising dollars flow to the beauty and weight-management industry.

“Girls themselves often know Instagram is not good for them,” says Crouse, “but they keep coming back. That’s because social media is addictive.” According to Derek Thompson, it’s “attention alcohol. Like booze, social media seems to offer an intoxicating cocktail of dopamine, disorientation, and, for some, dependency.”

Facebook has pledged to do better, and Mark Zuckerberg is now the father of girls. But, says Crouse, what’s “more telling than what Silicon Valley parents say is what they do. Many of them have long known that technology can be harmful. That’s why they’ve often banned their own children from using it.”

[“For Teenage Girls, Instagram Is a Cesspool”](#) by Lindsay Crouse in *The New York Times*, October 9, 2021

MENTAL HEALTH STATE OF EMERGENCY

Education groups, mental health associations, and psychologists agree, COVID-19 has caused a rise in mental health concerns for many, especially children, reports [Education Week](#). “Mental health emergency visits among children are on the rise. Between March and October of 2020, they increased 24 percent for children ages 5-11, and 31 percent for kids ages 12-17,” reports author Alyson Klein. The data further shows an increase in suspected suicide attempts among girls ages 12-17, a more than 50 percent spike in visits to the emergency room, compared to the same period in 2019.

Our Flemington-Raritan Guidance Counselors Gina Collins, Barley Sheaf School; Rebecca Moeri, Copper Hill School; Mary Pepe and Viviana Moncada, Francis A. Desmares School; Sarah Fontanez and Susan Severino (who will join the District at the end of November), Robert Hunter School; Heather Albanese and Lindsay John, Reading-Fleming Intermediate School; and Colette Bails and Amy Lopez, J.P.

Case Middle School can all attest to the increased rates of mental health concerns in our students in our schools. Our guidance counselors report they have seen an increase in students needing support for anxiety and depression and more students that experience trauma at home. Additionally, our district partners with Effective School Solutions in providing mental health support for families and students. Please reach out to your child’s guidance counselor if support is needed.

REFERENDUM UPDATE

Work continues throughout the District toward completion of referendum upgrades and improvements. Painters have been on site at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School as fresh coats of paint on the exterior of the building are nearly complete. RFIS stucco and refinishing work is more than 88% completed. The school had new landscaping and fencing as part of the external improvements to the facility.



The District started up existing boilers and newly installed hot-water heating system components between October 15, 2021 and October 17, 2021. The heating systems are temporarily started-up and were operated over the weekend to test the new components of the heating systems in advance of the forthcoming heating-season.

The District is finalizing security and communication upgrades that were afforded by the 2018 Referendum. Tests were being completed on the system at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School this week. For those that live nearby Reading-Fleming Intermediate School you may have heard testing of the speaker system that occurred on Monday afternoon. Some of you may have noticed strobe light testing on Tuesday afternoon. We are completing tests to finalize our installation of our communication systems.

The District continues to focus on health and safety of students, staff, and faculty. In the event of an emergency, communication is key in notifying authorities of an emerging threat to the safety of our schools.

Eastern DataComm, a safety and communications solution for schools, is a fully automated communication system that provides communication in the event of an emergency, such as a lockdown or building evacuation. Through the 2018 referendum the district purchased a lockdown emergency notification system (LENS). The LENS technology system allows us to immediately alert everyone on and off school grounds of a lockdown active threat or other emergency event. How quickly we respond to an incident or active threat is what saves lives.

The LENS system is a communication system in all schools with the ability to provide emergency notification through a variety of systems. Our newly installed system notifies everyone in the vicinity with an emergency call to desk

phones and dedicated cell phones, emergency emails, and text messages. The system integrates with our existing school and office communication systems and can scale with our facilities as we continue to grow.

You may have noticed on the perimeter of the entrances and exits to each school a metal pole with solar panels on the top. The Eastern DataComm Lens system also includes emergency strobe lights that are installed on metal poles at the entrances off the main road turning onto the school property, alerting for example the school bus drivers and parents not to turn into the school property because an emergency is taking place. Also installed as part of the DataComm system are horns at the back of ballfields that are set back on the school property so that the students and staff can hear any emergency announcements taking place.



At Copper Hill, the concrete repair work is largely completed pending the forthcoming repairs to the columns at the main entrance. This work is scheduled to be completed during the Winter Recess (Dec. 24-31), weather-permitting, with the corresponding concrete work to occur in the spring (ideally during the April 15-22 Spring Recess). Concrete work will temporarily replace the loose stones around the columns with asphalt until the new concrete can be installed. This will help keep the front of our school neat and tidy and eliminate the messiness caused by little feet tromping through the small stones. The area has become quite dusty and messy with so many students passing by the columns.

The image below from July shows the work that was in progress to improve the curbs and sidewalks around the school.



Heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) is largely complete in all schools where unit ventilators were installed. Robert Hunter, Francis A. Desmares, Barley Sheaf, and Reading-Fleming Intermediate School all had air-conditioning installed due to the 2018 passing of the referendum. Unit ventilators can be seen in hallways, classrooms, gymnasiums, cafeterias, offices, and other spaces in the schools.



Upgrades at all schools without air-conditioning, Robert Hunter, Francis A. Desmares, Barley Sheaf, and Reading-Fleming Intermediate School, had unit ventilators

installed in classrooms. Classrooms also received new shelving units alongside unit ventilators to provide storage in classrooms.

Cooling zones are set up throughout the schools to provide comfortable learning environments for staff, students and faculty. Unit ventilators are installed in ceilings



and in classrooms throughout schools. Metal piping and wiring was installed during the summer to upgrade electrical units for HVAC. J.P. Case Middle School already had air-conditioning installed in the school. Copper Hill Elementary School HVAC system had upgrades and dehumidification HVAC system installed. HVAC systems will continue to be tinkered with in the springtime to ascertain the correct humidity and blowing capacity to achieve maximum efficiency and comfort.



Barley Sheaf, Robert Hunter, Francis A. Desmares Elementary Schools and Reading-Fleming Intermediate School all had roof work either this past summer in 2021 or during the summer of 2020. The district replaced 325,000 square footage, or 7.5 acres, of roofing as part of the 2018 Referendum! In addition, 450 pieces of mechanical equipment have been added to the buildings, in addition to new windows, doors, louvers, etc.

During the two torrential storms, Tropical Storm Ida and the October 26 nor-easter, some areas on school rooftops leaked. All leaks have been reported to the respective contractors for priority action. The architect and project manager reported that in the majority of situations the leaks were caused by HVAC exhaust fans that were installed on rooftops for HVAC. Exhaust fan modifications were recommended by the exhaust fan manufacturer. Repairs have been prioritized to contractors for quick action. The District, along with the architect and project manager, will continue to identify, track and remediate any building leaks (roof related, mechanical, window or other) and follow up with all contacts to make sure work is ship-shape!

At Reading-Fleming Intermediate School, we are reviewing a landscape design to conceal the HVAC equipment on the RFIS Bonnell Street lawn, including gravel to be placed around that HVAC equipment. The District's preference is for a decorative 6'0" tall black metal fence (similar to that along Court Street) along with red stone and ornamental grasses.



LUNCH WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT: PANDEMIC WORRIES CONTINUE FOR STUDENTS

During the months of September and October I had the opportunity to eat lunch with two groups of students, one group from Francis A. Desmares School in September and another group from Copper Hill School in October. Lunch bunches will continue all year, albeit in a slightly different fashion due to our social distancing procedures and eliminating combining cohorts as much as possible.

Superintendent Lunch Bunches began pre-COVID-19 during my first year as superintendent. The idea originated from my days teaching as an elementary school teacher. Whether I was having lunch with my pre-school students, or kindergarten, first, second, third or fifth grade students, I learned so much about their lives as students such as who their close friends were, what troubles they were experiencing, and their families.

During all lunch bunch gatherings I spend time talking with students about what they enjoy about their school and their lives as students. Often students will tell me how much they love their teacher and their school. During September and October students shared how hard last year was being home. When I asked students what we could do to help them have a good year this year one student responded, "Something that helps us believe in ourselves, like art." Students asked for cool down spots in every classroom and Legos to build.

In the [October 10, 2021 Education Week article](#), author Larry Ferlazzo published how students are feeling in their third year of pandemic schooling. One student in Sacramento, California shared that "teachers make her feel welcome, safe, and supported when they give out a good vibe and good positive words." Another student shared that he feels very confused this year.

A 2019 report from the Aspen Institute, titled "[From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope](#)," focuses on promoting our students' positive social and emotional well-being. The report further confirms that supporting students' social, emotional, and cognitive development relates positively to traditional measures like attendance, grades, test scores, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and overall well-being.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: A CALL TO SERVE

The District is forming a Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee as the current five-year plan expires in the 2022-2023 school year. Strategic Planning is a process by which school districts identify strengths and challenges, define a vision, set objectives and goals, and establish action steps. The Board of Education is evaluating proposals to complete the strategic planning process from the New Jersey Schools Boards Association and from Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates. As part of the process, the District will engage employees, residents, and volunteer representatives of our community in the process through committee work. If you are interested in serving on the Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee, please email lbruhn@frsd.k12.nj.us with your contact information.



STUDENT STEM OPPORTUNITIES

The National Science Board (NSB) released a report, *The STEM Labor Force of Today: Scientists, Engineers, and Skilled Technical Workers*, which shows the critical contribution that STEM workers make to the U.S. economy and reinforces the value of training and education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM.) The report includes the nearly 20 million individuals whose jobs required them to use significant levels of STEM expertise and technical knowledge but who do not hold a bachelors or higher degree.

A 2012 report by the American Institute for Research on participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is one of many to highlight the challenge of the United States education system to produce enough STEM-capable students (American Institute for Research, 2012)¹. Below are some STEM opportunities for students that are offered through the U.S. Department of Education through the STEM Newsletter:

An Airport Design Challenge: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is thrilled to be hosting another round of the very popular [Airport Design Challenge](#), where students are encouraged to form teams and recreate a real airport in the Minecraft virtual platform. Students from K-12 can participate using the free version of Minecraft and all of them will get the chance to not only use Minecraft in a unique way, but also learn lessons about aviation and airports along the way. Student enrollment opens **November 1, 2021**.

Unfold the Universe Art Challenge: Stars, galaxies, nebulae oh my! What will NASA James Webb Space Telescope reveal when it peers back through 13.5 billion years of time? Create, using any form of art, what you think the Webb Telescope will discover for a chance to be featured on NASA's historic launch broadcast. Join the [#UnfoldTheUniverse Art Challenge](#) today. Deadline for Submissions is **December 18, 2021**.

Design Moon-Digging Robots with Lunabotics: NASA and Future Engineers are challenging young innovators to help design a new robot concept for an excavation mission on the Moon. The [Lunabotics Junior Contest](#) is open to K-12 students in U.S. public and private schools, as well as home-schoolers. Entries are due **January 25, 2022**.



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

School will be in session for all students on Monday, November 1, and Wednesday, November 3. Students will not be in school on Tuesday, November 2, as the District holds a staff in-service program during Election Day. In addition, students will not be in school on Thursday and Friday, November 4 and 5, as the District is closed for the New Jersey Education Association's annual convention.

¹ American Institutes for Research (October, 2012). *Broadening Participation in STEM*. Retrieved from the American Institutes for Research [https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Broadening Participation in STEM Feb 14 2013 0.pdf](https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Broadening%20Participation%20in%20STEM%20Feb%2014%202013%200.pdf)

CALENDAR REMINDERS

- November 1 - School in Session
- November 2 - School Closed for Students/Staff Development Day
- November 3 - School in Session
- November 4 - School Closed/NJEA Convention
- November 5 - School Closed/NJEA Convention

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR GOVERNOR'S EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION



Do you know a classroom teacher or educational services professional who is dedicated, inspiring, and making a difference? If so, please take the time to recommend this person for the Governor's Educator of the Year Program by completing a nomination form template and returning it to the building principal. Administrators, staff members, students, parents and community members are encouraged to participate. Please use [this link](#) to nominate educators of the year in our District. Nominations are due November 12.

SUPERINTENDENT RIDES THE BUS

I rode afternoon bus #46 on October 21 with driver "Mr. Bob" and spoke with students from Francis A. Desmares Elementary School. The Superintendent Rides the Bus program provides the opportunity for me to interact with students and bus drivers on a more personal level. Students shared that they are happy to be back in school with their friends. Some students shared that their favorite school meals were macaroni & cheese and meatball sandwiches.



DISTRICT INFORMATION

The Flemington-Raritan School District (FRSD) is a regional, pre-K-8 district serving the children, parents, and residents of Flemington Borough and Raritan Township, an area encompassing 38 square miles. Our 3,031 students, 520 employees, which includes 395 faculty members, support staff, and substitute teachers are housed in six buildings: four elementary (preK-4), an intermediate school (5-6), and a middle school (7-8). Our graduates complete their 9-12 education at the Hunterdon Central Regional High School. The overall demographic profile for our district includes:

Free and reduced lunch count: 615 students
Students with disabilities: 572 students
English Language Learners: 247
Homeless students: 1
Total enrollment: 3,305