



# Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parent Newsletter

September, 2021 Edition 2

Editor in Chief: Dr. Kari McGann, Superintendent of Schools [kmcgann@frsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:kmcgann@frsd.k12.nj.us)

Co-Editor: Mrs. Laura Bruhn, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent [lbruhn@frsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:lbruhn@frsd.k12.nj.us)



## A RAINY START TO OUR SCHOOL YEAR

This week our community felt the strength of Ida. I hope that your family and your home fared well in the torrential storm. Many in our community did not. The Flemington-Raritan community had significant issues with flooding in and around our community. Parking lots were flooded, homes took on water, and electrical power is still out to many homes and businesses.

On the night of the storm the National Weather Service issued a rare flash flood emergency for Central Jersey. At 11 PM during the night of the storm, it was still raining heavily in Central Jersey. Governor Murphy declared a state of emergency for all 21 counties at 10 PM. Our community and many others were hit hard by the storm.

Our phenomenal buildings and grounds crew were on site until late in the evening on the night of the storm. They battled leaks, flooding, clogged drains in courtyards and streets that were overrun with rain water to help protect our schools. Some of our custodial crew spent the entire night in our schools and worked thirty-six hours straight. Members of our technology crew were also in the buildings very late working to protect technology infrastructure.

On Thursday morning buildings and grounds crew were on site again to assess the damages and make repairs. Building principals and the Superintendent's office arrived the next morning with breakfast, hot coffee, and bagels. Buildings were assessed, damages repaired and rectified. The rain brought challenges but our entire team pulled together to overcome the challenges placed before us.

Due to the weather our professional development day for faculty and staff that was planned for September 2, 2021, needed to be postponed. However, we are very excited that our buildings will be ready for students to return on Wednesday, September 8, 2021.

Students are returning for full in-person learning this fall. As a reminder, all students returning for a full day of school on

Wednesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. Students second full day of school is on Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup> with the third full day of school on Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Monday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, schools are closed for Labor Day. Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, schools are closed for Rosh Hashanah. We are looking forward to our students returning for full day, in-person learning!

As students return for full day instruction, learning gaps need to be determined. The district is partnering with NWEA, a research-based, not-for-profit organization that assists educators to determine growth and proficiency in math and language arts. Many of our students have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. The NWEA assessments give information to teachers they can use to inform classroom instruction and for administration to determine if additional academic support is needed.

The computer-adapted educational assessment was first used in schools in 1985. Indiana, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Michigan, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, New Jersey and other states use the NWEA, also known as MAP, to plan professional development programs, identify trends for students and grades within schools, plan for differentiated instruction, set goals for students, monitor progress toward goals, and communicate with parents. Watch for more information to arrive from the district and your child's principal on the NWEA. The first assessments are scheduled to take place between September 29<sup>th</sup> and October 8<sup>th</sup> for students in grades 3-8.



### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN;

#### WHAT IS IT AND WHAT IS PLANNED?

The American Rescue Plan is part of a federal COVID-19 relief package signed by President Joe Biden this past March. According to the American Rescue Plan, the district can use funds on a variety of items from education technology to mental health services in order to help address the needs of students and educators.

According to [Education Week](#), the American Rescue Plan provides \$1.9 trillion in relief funding. Local school districts must ensure that at least 20 percent of relief funding is to address learning regression.

The district is using the American Rescue Plan funding to address the impact of lost instruction time due to the COVID pandemic. The district felt it was important to reach out to families, raise up their voices to allow them to have an opportunity to share in the planning. Survey responses were collected from the community to plan for large-scale initiatives such as offering tutoring and emotional support through counseling services. We received 493 responses which were used to make decisions to address academic learning loss and mental health challenges. Out of the 493 responses, 240 families chose summer learning academy and/or enrichment programs as their top response to address academic learning loss.

Summer learning academies and enrichment programs were offered this summer and will continue to be offered next summer. Through the survey, parents requested after school clubs and learning opportunities to *“let kids be kids again.”* Parents requested small-group counseling sessions and programs for students *“to catch up on their social and emotional learning skills.”* The District took into account the public comments of our community in the planning.

Flemington-Raritan School District recognizes that in order to educate our students, we have an obligation to provide the social and emotional support necessary in the school setting. Dr. Danielle Hamblin, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education shared that Effective Schools Solutions (ESS) has served as the district’s partner in licensed clinicians and therapeutic support. ESS provides services through licensed clinicians and therapeutic counselors whose expertise is utilized to ensure students identified by school personnel receive counseling support so they are available for learning. Individual, group, and even family counseling sessions support our students identified as in need of intensive social emotional supports.

The District has hired an additional counselor through ESS at J.P. Case where post pandemic, the District identified a need among the student population. Counseling intervention and family session support will be provided. The additional counselor will be able to support students with counseling services and service additional students in the same short-term process.

The American Rescue Plan requires that districts use at least 20 percent of the funding appropriated to the district to address learning loss. A few examples the District has selected to pinpoint funding includes:

- Addressing the unique needs of our under-served students;
- Providing after-school and before-school tutoring services for students;
- Professional development opportunities;
- Interventions that respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs;
- Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English

learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness;

- The purchase of the NWEA high quality assessment tool to provide valid and reliable data to accurately assess students’ academic progress and assist our educators in meeting students’ academic needs, including differentiating instruction and implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students;
- Invest in family engagement infrastructure specifically with the hiring of additional guidance counselors, one at J.P. Case Middle School using Effective Schools Solutions, and bilingual guidance counselors for Francis A. Desmares and Robert Hunter Elementary Schools;
- Opportunities to enhance families’ ability to support student learning through family literacy and math nights, STEM programming, workshops, and elementary STEM labs, book study groups, preschool programs, summer math intervention clubs offered the summer of 2021 and 2022;
- Provide welcoming spaces that allow for interaction between students; and
- Balanced literacy professional development.

It is critical that the district appropriate funds with a critical eye on students’ recovery needs. The pandemic created challenges for every child, while at the same time, exacerbated existing challenges for both students and staff. We have invested funds on high-impact strategies to address student needs. According to the New Jersey Department of Education May 24, 2021 Broadcast, the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District was provided an initial allocation of \$854,984.



**SUPERINTENDENT  
ROUNDTABLE  
TALK-A-LATTE  
CHATS**

Date	Time	Location
August 31	6-7:30 p.m.	J.P. Case Cafeteria
October 12	6-7:30 p.m.	Barley Sheaf Cafeteria
December 1	6-7:30 p.m.	Reading-Fleming Cafeteria
February 2	6-7:30 p.m.	Robert Hunter Cafeteria
April 7	6-7:30 p.m.	Desmares Cafeteria
May 31	6-7:30 p.m.	Copper Hill Cafeteria

\*To support our families whose native language is not English, translators will be provided at meetings that are scheduled for Robert Hunter Elementary and Francis A. Desmares Elementary Schools.

The first meeting was held on August 31 at J.P. Case Middle School. Eleven parents and community members talked

together about mental health support systems and school reopening. Discussion focuses on the following topics:

- Anxiety;
- Mental health resources including Effective School Solutions, school counselors, summer counseling sessions, videos and welcome back meetings with students;
- Gym classes;
- Masks;
- Growth mindset versus fixed mindset;
- Vaccinations;
- School newspapers;
- LGBTQ+ curriculum.

Ms. Lynne Gonski, M.S., Coordinator and Therapist, School-Based Youth Services for Hunterdon Behavioral Health joined the group to share information and support for families.



**WELCOME, DR. EDWARD IZBICKI, INTERIM BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR!**

The District welcomes Dr. Edward Izbicki, Sr. as the Interim Business Administrator for the 2021-2022 school year. Dr. Izbicki, Sr. replaces Mrs. Stephanie Voorhees who retired on June 30, 2021. Dr. Izbicki is an adjunct professor of School Law at Seton Hall and Montclair State University. He serves as a Mentor Coach for the NJ EXCEL program for the Program Evaluation Review of the Teachers to Leaders Program for the NJEA. Dr. Izbicki has served as a Business Administrator in top-notch districts before retiring. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Izbicki to the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District team. Welcome, Dr. Izbicki!



**WELCOME MR. TODD AMIET, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES!**

The District also welcomes Mr. Todd Amiet as the Director of Educational Facilities. Mr. Todd Amiet replaces Mr. Jim Shumate who retired on June 30, 2021. Mr. Amiet joins the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District team from South Brunswick Public Schools where he served as the Director of Buildings and Grounds. Mr. Amiet is a highly accomplished, senior-level Buildings and Grounds professional with an extensive track record of delivering tools and strategies (*and an all hands-on-deck approach*) to achieve operational excellence for multi-facility organizations such as Flemington-Raritan Regional School District.



**BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHTS**

Our District is eager to welcome parents back into our schools for annual Back-to-School Night events. It is important to note that

only one parent per child may attend Back-to-School Night and masks are mandated indoors per the Governor's Executive Order. Limited parent attendance with a single parent allows each classroom to maintain social distancing and does not overcrowd classrooms with upwards of more than forty adults in a single classroom. Dates and times are listed below:

- September 20 – J.P. Case Middle School, 5:45 p.m.; *Early Dismissal Day for Grades 7 & 8 only*
- September 21 – Reading-Fleming Intermediate School, 6:30 p.m.; *Early Dismissal Day for Grades 5 & 6 only*
- September 23 – Barley Sheaf School, 6 p.m.; Copper Hill School, 5:30 p.m.; Francis A. Desmares School, 6 p.m.; Robert Hunter School, 6 p.m.; *Early Dismissal Day for PreK-Grade 4 only*



**PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

This year, all parents will have the option of attending parent-teacher conferences either in-person or remotely. Please be sure to review the conference and early dismissal schedule outlined below:

- November 29 – Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Conferences, 3:15-5:45 p.m.; J.P. Case Conferences, 5:30-8 p.m.; *Regular Day for All Students (K-8)*
- November 30 – Elementary School Conferences, 6-8 p.m.; Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Conferences, 1:30-4 p.m.; J.P. Case Conferences, 5:30-8 p.m.; *Early Dismissal for All Students (K-8)*
- December 1 – Elementary School Conferences, 1:45-3:45 p.m.; Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Conferences, 5:30-8 p.m.; J.P. Case Conferences, 1:30-4 p.m.; *Early Dismissal for All Students (K-8)*
- December 2 – Elementary School Conferences, 6-8 p.m.; Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Conferences, 5:30-8 p.m.; J.P. Case Conferences, 2:30-5 p.m.; *Early Dismissal for All Students (K-8)*

- December 3 – Elementary School Conferences, 1:45-3:45 p.m.; Reading-Fleming Intermediate School Conferences, 1:30-4 p.m.; J.P. Case Conferences, 1:30-4 p.m.; *Early Dismissal for All Students (K-8)*

**REFERENDUM WORK**

Tropical Storm Ida set our referendum work back a bit. Contractors and roofers are continuing to work on our buildings. Unit ventilators will continue to be installed over the next few days, ceiling tiles are being replaced, and contractors are working to connect pipework. The final truck with the remaining twenty-seven unit ventilators arrived on site about one week ago after being delayed at the Canadian border. These units are currently being installed.

The contractors are going to be working all weekend, even on the Labor Day holiday on Monday and on Rosh Hashanah next Tuesday. Contractors will begin working a second shift, a shift that begins after students have finished the school day, beginning on September 8.

Our custodial and facilities team will continue to support our staff and faculty. We are excited for the return of students on Wednesday, September 8, 2021 for full day in-person learning!

**CLASS III OFFICERS**

Class III Officers are retired police officers that traditionally serve in schools to provide safety and security to staff, students, visitors, and provide building security. This summer the Board of Education approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the Flemington Borough and with the Raritan Township between the Flemington Raritan Regional School District and our local community partners, providing the final step for four officers to be on campus during the 2020-2021 school year.



Officers Mike Fitzpatrick and Officer Harry Hultz along with Officer Craig Santoro will once again be on campuses. Joining our team will be Officer Darren Powell. Parents should expect to see Officer Harry, Officer Mike, Officer Craig, and Officer Darren at any of our schools in the district both in the daytime and at evening events. Occasionally, another member of the Raritan or

Flemington Borough Police Department attend nightly events due to the limited number of hours that retired police department officers can serve.

**SUICIDE AWARENESS**

September is suicide awareness month. According to NAMI, the Throughout the month of September, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), suicide prevention awareness month provides a dedicated time to come together with collective passion and strength around a difficult subject.



While suicide prevention is important to address year round, the month of September has a host of opportunities to get involved with local organizations focused on providing a system to bring voices together to advocate for better mental health care.

According to national research published by NAMI,

- Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death among people aged 10-34.
- 46% of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health condition.
- While nearly half of individuals who die by suicide.

[Learn more at this link.](#)

