

# Flemington-Raritan School District

## Parent & Community Newsletter



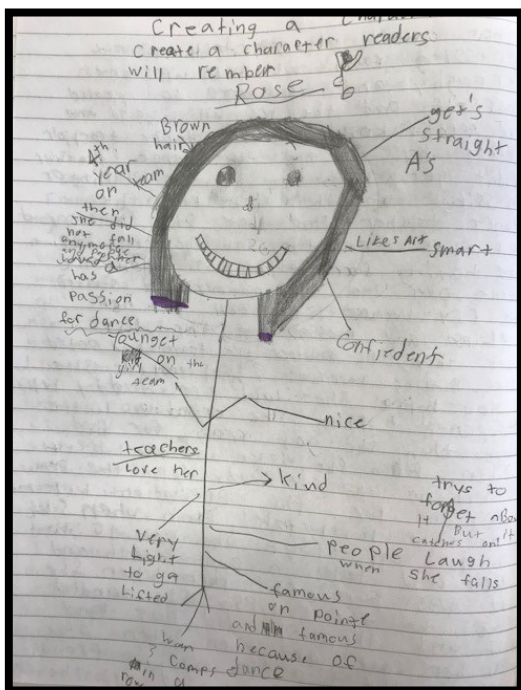
September, 2019 Edition 2 of the 2019-2020 School Year  
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### HAPPY FALL!

Hello, Parents and Community Members!

The days of September seem to go by so quickly. The first days of school rapidly turn in to the first weeks of school. By the last few days in September, students have acclimated to their classrooms and the routines of the learning environment; our fall student-athletes have competed in their first games against opponents; fifth-grade students at Reading Fleming Intermediate School have learned their way around the school; seventh-grade students at J.P. Case Middle School walk the corridors with a calmer sense of wherewithal and the proud strut of a middle school student; even our kindergarten students have learned the routines of their kindergarten classrooms and also the procedures for the cafeteria—no small feat for a five-year-old.

Earlier this month, I spent some time with Mrs. Carol Howell, building principal at Francis A. Desmares Elementary School. Together we had the opportunity to visit some classrooms while students were writing in language arts during writers workshop.



Notice how the writer describes the character's traits; those that make the character strong, confident and smart but also some that might be problematic for the character. In this case, the writer writes that the character, Rose, is the youngest on the dance team.

The writings tucked away in children's notebooks and journals are treasures to be held on to. They often hold memories of childhood and can be quite the source for conversations of yesteryear. I encourage parents to ask your children about their writings in school and boost their confidence as writers by expressing your delight in their skills as a writer and creative thinker. With parent conferences coming up soon maybe you'll have the opportunity to take a peek into your child's notebooks and journals to see what thoughts and memories have found their way into a narrative or memoir writing.

Whether a student at one of our schools who has transitioned to a new building or a student who moved to the District over the summer or even a new staff member joining the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District faculty, all seem to have a sense of pride at being a member of the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District...and for good reason! We are a learning community, supporting every student, every day, at every opportunity.

**REFERENDUM**  
**NOVEMBER 5, 2019**  
**FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL**  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Over the past two months, I have been speaking with members of our community about the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District's \$42,063,000, two-question bond referendum. I have presented to the public and the Board of Education many times about the two-question referendum that will go to the voters of the Flemington-Raritan community on Election Day, November 5, 2019. You can find the presentations [here](#).

As a reminder, the referendum has two questions for which the voters will be asked to approve; 1) safety, security, and external updates to the structure of our buildings and 2) indoor

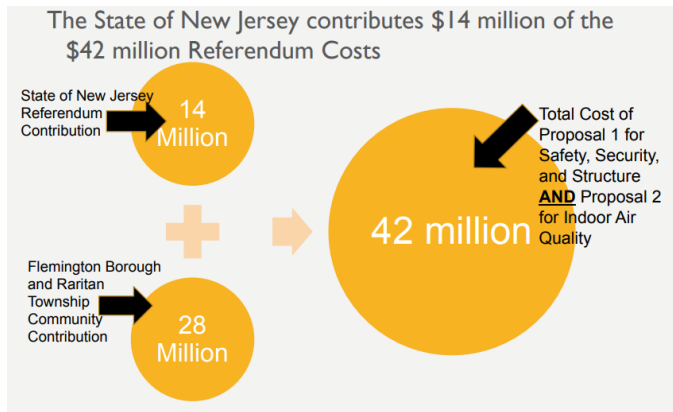
air quality – air conditioning and dehumidification in all buildings where air conditioning is not already present, for a total cost of \$42,063,000 for both referendum items.

The State of New Jersey is currently offering facility aid funding, which will capture approximately 40% of all project costs. The District applied for and received approval for State funding, a contribution of \$14 million.

Question 1: Safety, security, and external updates to our facilities include security upgrades and improvements including cameras, equipment, an upgraded telephone communication system, and door and alarm upgrades. It also includes site improvements, including parking lot upgrades, sidewalk, curb and fencing improvements, and drainage improvements. Roof replacements and repairs for all buildings, except for at J.P. Case. Window replacements and external building repairs at all other buildings.

Question 2: Indoor air quality is to provide indoor air quality upgrades, including air conditioning (HVAC) and humidity control systems at all schools, except for J.P. Case Middle School. J.P. Case Middle School already has air conditioning. Copper Hill Elementary School has air conditioning too and only needs a dehumidification system.

The cost for both referendum items is \$42 million; \$14 million of which will be funded by the State of New Jersey.



It is important to note that question two (installing air conditioning and dehumidification) cannot be approved by the voters without the approval of question one (safety, security, and external structure updates).

The reason is simple: Question Two is contingent upon the approval of Question One because the rooftops of our elementary and intermediate school buildings (RH, FAD, BS, and RFIS) cannot support air conditioning with the rooftops in their current state. Copper Hill only needs a dehumidification system. The building has air conditioning already. Rooftops and some windows must be repaired and replaced before a rooftop air conditioning system can be placed in any of our elementary buildings or at our intermediate school. Without a rooftop that can support an air-conditioning system and windows that control the airflow, an air-conditioning system will not be feasible, nor energy efficient.

I have attended multiple events to provide information to the public about the referendum; Back-to-School Nights and Open House events on September 18 at RFIS and on September 19 at our elementary schools and then on September 25 at J.P. Case Middle School. All events provided the opportunity for information to be shared with parents and community members. Many of you helped to provide information to parents at Open Houses and Back-to-School events. Thank you!

Please remember to vote on November 5, 2019. The schools will be closed that day in honor of Election Day. Later that week on Thursday, November 7 and Friday, November 8, schools will be closed again for the statewide New Jersey Education Association yearly conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

If you are traveling that week, please remember to turn in a Vote by Mail ballot. You can download a Vote by Mail ballot [here](#) and mail it to Hunterdon County Clerk, Hall of Records, or drop it off at the Hunterdon County Clerk's Office on 71 Main Street in Flemington, NJ. The Clerk's office will process the application while you wait and you can choose to vote at that time or mail the ballot later.

All ballots MUST be postmarked no later than Election Day and received by the Board of Elections by the close of business on the Thursday following the election. You may appear in person through 3 PM on the Monday before the election. If you have any questions, call Mary H. Melfi at (908) 788-1214.

### **AN UPDATE: CLASS III SLEO OFFICERS TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT**

In the August newsletter, I reminded readers that last spring I spoke with members of the Raritan Township Committee to consider ways to support the development and implementation of a plan for school district security to protect the school community's investment in school buildings, facilities, staff, and our students.



I asked the Raritan Township Committee to modify the number of police officers so as to allow the employment of Class III special law enforcement officers (SLEOs) to serve in the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District community.

Class III officers are retired police officers that traditionally serve in schools to provide safety and security to staff, students, and building security. At the August 20, 2019, Raritan Township meeting, the council approved a memorandum of understanding with Flemington-Raritan Regional School District to hire Class III SLEO officers. The Board of Education approved the agreement at the meeting this past Monday night.

The Borough of Flemington, in cooperation with the Flemington Borough Police Department, approved a Memorandum of Understanding with FRSD to employ a Class

III SLEO officer. At the October 2 Board of Education meeting, I will recommend to the Board of Education the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between Flemington Borough and the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District.

During the latter part of September, I met with members of the Raritan Township Police Department to interview candidates for Class III SLEO officers in Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. In collaboration with the Chief of Police of Raritan Township, the intent is to hire two SLEO officers to be employed by the Raritan Township Police Department to begin serving in the district near the end of October or early November.

Chief Al Payne and the Raritan Police Department explain that the SLEO officers have three main points of responsibility: safety, mentorship, and training. As an example, in the photo

above taken at Robert Hunter Elementary School, Officer Russo talked with students about the role of a police officer and the assistance they provide to our community. On this day, he talked about safety with Robert Hunter Elementary School students.



### **THE SECOND ANNUAL HUNTERDON COUNTY SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT**

Student and staff safety is a top priority for the District. The District has two district safety specialists, Mr. Peter Sibilias, Vice Principal at J.P. Case Middle School and Mr. Jesse Lockett, Vice Principal at Copper Hill Elementary School. Both faculty members attend specialized training to hold the title of District Safety Specialists. Mr. Sibilias and Mr. Lockett both serve as chairpersons on the District Security Committee and assist the Superintendent in decision making on safety and security in the District.

In collaboration with Mr. Sibilias and Mr. Lockett, the District will hold the second annual Hunterdon School Safety Summit next month. Last year's summit featured guest speakers Lt. Kevin Burd, from the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office

and Dr. Thomas Gambino and Mr. Robert Sensi, both from the New Jersey Department of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning. All three of these special guests will join us again on November 19<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 PM.

I am excited to share that this year's Hunterdon School Safety Summit will feature a keynote speaker, Lisa Hamp. Ms. Hamp is a survivor of the Virginia Tech school shooting on April 16, 2007. With her classmates, Lisa built a barricade to prevent the shooter from entering their classroom. She will share her experience from during and after the shooting, as well as lessons learned from Virginia Tech Tragedy to first responders, mental health professionals, educators, and community leaders.

Lisa Hamp's work has been featured in the Washington Post, Huffington Post, Campus Safety Magazine, Domestic Preparedness Journal, and many other prominent news outlets. She works with the Koshka Foundation to improve prevention and response to active threats and recovery after the crisis. Ms. Hamp is a member of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals and has a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Virginia Tech, a Master's degree in Operations Research from George Mason University, and a Master's degree in Economics from John Hopkins University.

School Districts from throughout Hunterdon County have joined together to bring Lisa to our community. A financial partnership from almost all the Hunterdon County School Districts for \$174 each, along with a donation from the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, will support Lisa's speaker fee to provide a night of learning about safety and security for our community.

If this event's focus interests you as a parent or community member of Flemington-Raritan, mark your calendars now and watch for information to reserve your free ticket(s). It is sure to be a well-attended event as invitations will be sent to all participating Hunterdon County School Districts.

### **COMMUNITY DAY CELEBRATION**

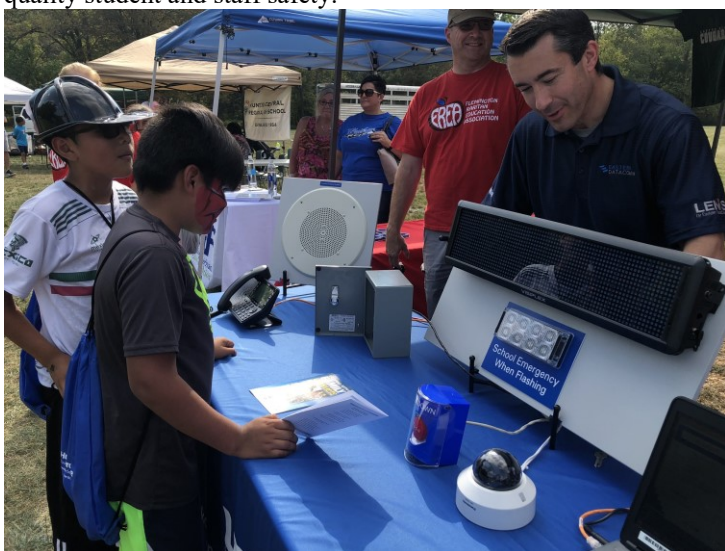
Saturday, September 28, 2019, was a spectacular day for the Flemington-Raritan community. The District thanks the many families, residents, students, and staff members who visited the FRSD booth at Raritan Township Community Day. Members of the Flemington Raritan administrative team and many faculty





members were present to high-five students, talk with parents, and share in the community spirit that Flemington-Raritan is so well known for displaying. The weather was beautiful! There were sheep to pet, greyhound dogs to meet, Hunterdon Central cheerleaders demonstrating tucks and flips, the Hunterdon Central Robotics team demonstrating their robotic skills, and many other community members out and about.

At the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District tent, a display was set up to demonstrate an emergency notification communication system that features 21<sup>st</sup>-century emergency equipment. Community members, students, and adults stopped by to investigate the flashing lights, upgraded telephone system, and outdoor and indoor communication systems. The 21<sup>st</sup>-century emergency communication system is one of the safety and security items featured in Question One on the November 5, 2019 referendum. It is the same system that Hunterdon Central, North Hunterdon/Voorhees, and other area Hunterdon school districts use to support high-quality student and staff safety.



The Flemington Raritan Education Association members were also present at Community Day to share with community members all the support that they provide to every student, every day, at every opportunity.



We share a special thank you with our administrative team for their participation in the day and recognize and thank the volunteers, municipal officials, fire/police/EMT personnel and local organizations for making the event a great success. Also, we share a special thank you with our maintenance staff for their help in setting up and breaking down the booth area.

The District is proud to be a part of this community endeavor and looks forward to participating again next year.



### **SUPERINTENDENT RIDES THE BUS DAY**

On Tuesday, September 17, I rode morning van #8 from RFIS to Copper Hill Elementary School with driver Ms. Karen. I sat next to a lovely pre-school student in "Ms. G's" class and had a chance to talk with her all about gymnastics, pre-school, LEGOs, and many other fun things our pre-school students get to do on a daily basis. It is a pleasure for me to be able to greet students as they get on the bus in the morning or wave good-bye to them at the end of the school day.



This event was the highlight of the week! I was asked by the pre-school students, "What is a Superintendent?" and "What do you do?" and "Can you ride our bus tomorrow?" Students receive a sticker that reads, "The Superintendent Rode My Bus Today" and an FRSD pencil. Thank you to Ms. Karen and our Hunterdon Central/FRSD Joint Transportation Services for helping to coordinate my monthly bus rides. My next bus ride is scheduled for Wednesday, October 30. Maybe I'll be on your child's bus!