

*“What is the duty of the teacher if not to inspire?”*

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# Grey Matters

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Welcome to all the parents who have signed up for the RJ Grey Principal’s Newsletter. Before I tell you about this periodical, let me say a few words about the first few days of school.

Congratulations to the staff and students of RJ Grey for an outstanding first week of school. On Wednesday, I met the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. Their excitement and exuberance shined above and beyond any nervousness they may have had at starting a new school. They were welcomed with open arms and hearts by the staff and they learned their way around the building, how to find the bathrooms, and tackled the difficult task of opening their lockers. Thursday saw the return of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Their confidence and pleasure at seeing their friends, being back in the building, and excitement at meeting their new teachers was thrilling to behold. Simply put, we got off to a great start and it is clear that this will be a fantastic year!

With that said, we need to recognize that for some students the beginning of school can be a difficult adjustment. Let’s not forget that new situations are often tricky for us as adults and we need to remember that new situations are that much more uncomfortable when you are a 12 or 13 year old. It is important to respect and validate these feelings. At the same time, as adults we need to let them know that these initial moments of anxiety are quickly replaced by the pleasure at making new friends and forming new relationships. After a few days of school, I am confident that all our students are going to feel great about school.

Now let me take a few steps back and introduce *Grey Matters* itself. Because communications is one of my priorities, I am sending you the first edition of my own principal’s newsletter. My plan is to distribute this newsletter every Monday morning. In the event you doubt my longevity for such a venture, I’ll have you know that I distributed a newsletter for the last four years (*The Riley House News*, at Newton North High School, and *The Northern Mumble*, at King Philip).

But first, a few caveats. I was not an English major, and my punctuation, grammar, and spelling are sometimes less than impressive (did I mention that my 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher gave

up on my spelling skills saying, “It is clear to me that you will never learn this material. You’re going to have difficult life young man.” God bless the creators of the computer spell check and the efforts of my wife for helping me sound coherent!!). I tend to write in a conversational style and I don’t think up what I’m going to write about until I sit down at my computer sometime on Sunday. Sometimes I finish VERY late – or early – Monday mornings. So please forgive my disjointed syntax, lax proofreading, and error-prone products. My fingers try to keep up on the keyboard with the thoughts that tumble out of my head but sometimes I just can’t get it right. Please bear with me.

As we all know, there are always issues and ideas about the school that people talk about in the hallways, on the sidelines of the soccer field, or just think about in the back of their minds. The problem is that quite often these issues go no further than the level of isolated conversations. A former colleague taught me the importance of “turning the lights on” to these issues. For good or for bad, bringing these issues to the light of day allows for a broader discussion and hopefully, results. This is where *Grey Matters* comes in. My intention here is to put in print what most people would only mumble. That is, to put the issues I am thinking about or have heard about out on the table to all of you directly, without the opportunity to be misquoted or misinterpreted because I was mumbling, something which is pretty common for me. Oh, and by the way, just so you’re aware, I also intend to e-mail this to parents/guardians. And yes, I’ve done that all along too.

In the past my ramblings have been about educational issues at the building, city, regional, state, and national level. I might talk about my family, the Patriots or the Bears, or maybe politics or music, or anything else that pops into my head. Sometimes I’ll send out statistics that I find intriguing. Regardless of what comes out, I hope you’ll find it connecting with me in some abstract way. Until we find the time for that cup of coffee and conversation together, alas, this will have to do.

I’ve found such regular correspondence with teachers and parents to be remarkably connective. I’m EXTREMELY interested in what you’re thinking and encourage you to respond to what I say. I would much rather have a cup of coffee and discuss things with each of you in person, but we all know that’s not going to happen on a regular basis. So, if nothing else, this will let you know what’s on my mind. I hope you take the time to send me an email when you feel so moved and ask me to come see you when it’s needed.

With that said, as of this first edition, I have over 500 parents on my principal’s email list and the list grows every day. In the past I have received multiple emails everyday, especially the day after a newsletter. The problem with this is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to respond to every email I receive. Let me be clear. I WILL READ EVERYTHING YOU SEND ME!!! While I will try to answer as many direct questions as possible, I unfortunately won’t have the time to respond to general comments and rhetorical questions. While I would never admit it, there *may* be times that I interpret a straight forward question as rhetorical. Please forgive me if I do not get back to you. As much as I would like to write back to everyone, I hope you can understand that I have a finite amount of time for emails. If I don’t respond and you really want an answer, please write back and say, “Hey buddy, could you stop eating those Bonbons for a second and

answer my question?" I try much harder to get back to second notices – ask my local library. Better yet would be to give me a call to touch base by phone or set up an appointment to come in and talk.

Whew, that was a mouthful. All I know for sure is that RJ Grey is a fantastic community and I am honored to have joined you.

..... It's gonna be a great year!