

“Genuine beginnings begin within us, even when they are brought to our attention by external opportunities.”

William Bridges

Grey Matters

Volume 3

September 1, 2005

Number 1

School has begun and our opening days have gone extremely well. The administrative team – Larry Fleigelman, Megan Hatt, and I - have enjoyed welcoming both faculty and students back to the RJG. Aside from a few moments of anxiety regarding the opening of lockers, the first days of school have gone without a hitch.

Let me begin by congratulating Head Custodian Bob Daley and all the members of his team for once again doing an outstanding job preparing the building for the first day of school. There is an unimaginable amount of work that goes into maintaining a building of our size, yet year after year, Bob and his crew come through. We are very lucky to have such a top notch and dedicated group taking care of our school.

It may be of interest to know that we currently have over 950 students enrolled at RJG with four teams per grade. In order to ensure strong team communication and support, Counselors and Assistant Principals are assigned to teams as well. A significant portion of the summer was spent building teams in order to balance them by: sending school, gender, world language request, and teacher recommendations. With careful planning, I believe our 7th and 8th grade teams are well balanced and provide a strong support system for students.

Every year, students will often ask “how are teams made?” and more importantly, “why can’t I be with my best friend?” Ultimately, it is impossible to assure that every student is teamed with “that special friend.” Much to their surprise, the vast majority of students discover both old and new friends on the teams to which they have been assigned. I am confident that the teams have been built in a manner which will ensure that every student will have the opportunity to maintain old friendships and develop new ones throughout the school year in an academically challenging environment.

While it was mentioned in the summer letter, I want to remind everyone about the new attendance procedure at RJG. If your child will be absent from or late to school, please call the absence line at (978)264-4700 (ex: 3333) by 7:30AM and state your child’s:

1. name (and please spell the name)
2. grade and team
3. if your child is absent or will be tardy

If you are calling between 7:30 and 3:30, please hang up and call (978)264-4700 ext. 3304 to speak with a member of our office staff.

After voicemail messages are transcribed, school staff then compares the messages with our homeroom attendance records. Students who are marked absent in homeroom but for whom we did not receive a call will be marked as “unexcused.” An unexcused absence will generate a phone call home. Please assist us in this process and remember to call the school if your child will be absent or tardy. To assist you in this process, we have ordered refrigerator magnets noting the absence line phone number for every student. Keep your eyes open, they should be coming home in your child’s backpack within the next few weeks.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone on our Back To School Night on September 29th. At that time, you will have the opportunity to meet with your child’s teacher and learn more about the programs offered at RJG. If, however, you have any questions, please do not wait. Please feel free to call or email the classroom teacher. While teachers are not routinely at their desks, they will generally respond to emails within 24 hours. The format for our email is first initial, last name, followed by our server address (mail.ab.mec.edu). For example, my address is chardimon@mail.ab.mec.edu. Should you prefer to call, a voicemail message can be left by calling our main number (978)264-4700 and asking for the specific teacher’s voice mail.

I would also ask you to consider adding your name to the PTSO e-mail list. These messages will be occasional reminders, clarifications, and last minute requests for assistance from the PTSO. You do not have to be on this list, but it is a simple way to keep in touch with school happenings, and to ask questions. To sign up, please go to the AB regional PTSO web-site at: <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/> and follow the prompts for the e-mail list.

I would be remiss if I did not express my sympathy for those affected by the hurricane Katrina. It is a catastrophic event that has touched us all. Members of the RJG Student Council are already investigating ways in which our school community can offer assistance.

Again, welcome to the 2005-06 school year at RJG. It is going to be a fantastic year.