

“At the moment you are most in awe of all there is about life that you don’t understand, you are closer to understanding it all than at any other time.”

Jane Wagner

Grey Matters

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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. The energy and enthusiasm of both staff and students was exciting to see and I am looking forward to a wonderful school year.

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 team taking care of our school.

It may be of interest to know that we welcomed 476 seventh graders and 517 eighth graders during this first week of classes. Ten years ago when the junior high expansion was first discussed, over 1000 students were anticipated by 2007. We are certainly close with 995 actively engaged students! While team and class sizes are large, I am confident in the abilities of the amazing RJG staff to provide a continued high level of academic excellence for all of our students.

In order to ensure strong team communication and support, please be aware that School Counselors and Assistant Principals are assigned to teams as follows:

Team	Counselor	Assist. Principal	Team	Counselor	Assist. Principal
7 Green	C. O’Brien	M. Hatt	8 Green	J. Rodero	M. Hatt
7 Orange	C. O’Brien J. Duclos	M. Hatt	8 Orange	J. Duclos	M. Hatt
7 Red	C. O’Brien J. Rodero	L. Fliegelman	8 Red	J. Duclos	L. Fliegelman
7 Gold	J. Rodero	L. Fliegelman	8 Gold	C. O’Brien	L. Fliegelman

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 compare 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 Back to School Night on September 28th. While more specific information will be forthcoming, I did want to mention that the structure for the evening will be somewhat different this year. Prior to your classroom visits, at 6:45PM, I will be personally addressing all of you as a group to talk about the developmental needs of 7th and 8th graders and the various ways the administration, faculty and staff support our students. Classroom visits will begin at 7:00PM per usual where you will have the opportunity to meet with your child’s teacher and learn more about the programs offered at RJG.

Should you have any immediate questions or concerns regarding the start of the year, **please do not hesitate** to call or email your child’s counselor and/or 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.

Last but not least, I would 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.

Again, I welcome you to the 2006-07 school year at RJG. We are committed to providing your child with a positive school experience and look forward to collaborating with all of you in this regard.

Have a great week!

CH

~

Craig Hardimon
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<http://ab.mec.edu/rjweb/index.html>