

*“We are built to make mistakes, coded for error.”*

**Lewis Thomas**

# Grey Matters

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While Saturday morning was pretty wet and windy – ask any soccer parent – the rest of weekend proved to be lovely. I hope all of you were able to get out and enjoy the wonderful early fall weather.

The school year is off to a great start. The 7th graders have begun to settle in and are making RJG their new home. The 8th graders are stepping up to the plate to be the role models for our school. I want to thank Jack Hughes, Allison Warren, and Margaret Gibbs for working tirelessly to finalize team and Grey Block schedules. The energy within each team and within each classroom has been exciting to see. I also wanted to acknowledge Steve Hall, Director of Technology and all members of the Technology Recourse Center (TRC) for the updating and upgrading of all technology in our building. This is going to be a great year.

A great opening of school does not, however, exclude us from addressing the interesting things some of our children do. Even with 15 years as a parent, and 24 years as an educator, I can still be surprised. Apparently, there is a “game” some of our students are playing while attending night football games and at other unstructured activities called “Tabletopping.” As I understand it, a few students may observe someone not paying attention. One person kneels behind the distracted child and the second person approaches from the front and shoves the distracted child backwards, causing her/him to fall over the kneeler. During the September 7th football game, there were two separate incidents of tabletopping which actually resulted in two RJG students leaving the hill with broken arms.

From talking to a few students during the week, this foolish game is actually not new and has occurred many times. Parents and guardians, please talk to your children about this potentially dangerous behavior. Even if we accept that these recent injuries were a fluke, tabletopping is a cruel joke at best and has no place at any event. I have already shared this concern with our Athletic Department and the Acton Police Department. Working together, we can help our children make wise and safe decisions.

While tabletopping is a case specific behavior, a more prevalent concern is how to protect our children from dangerous cyberspace behavior.

*According to a recent survey by Emerson Hospital of 8000 middle and high school students in school districts north and west of Boston, more than 19.5% of 8th*

*grade students reported having given information about themselves over the Internet to someone they have never met. According to the same survey, 13.6% of eighth graders and 12.8% of 6th graders reported having met someone in person with whom they had initially contacted online. (2007 CAFY Report)*

Clearly this is an important issue for all of us, as parent, to be aware of.

Please know that the RJG Faculty is committed to a safe school culture and that our professional development activities for the year will prioritize anti-harassment and safe school initiatives, including cyberspace safety. In this regard, I highlight the work of Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone who has announced the creation of a Cyber Protection Program, a team consisting of the Assistant District Attorney, other lawyers, State Police and civilian forensic specialists. The team will focus on the investigation and prosecution of cases involving the inappropriate use of computers, including those that target our children and other vulnerable victims. Leone, who took office as District Attorney in January, has been a leader in developing programs designed to protect people on-line.

Let me take a moment to talk about the RJG School Council. The school council is comprised of a school administrator, teachers, and parents who are responsible for assisting the principal in identifying educational needs of students, reviewing the annual budget, and formulating a school improvement plan and educational goals.

This year, two parents or guardians of 7th graders are needed for participation on the RJG JHS School Council.~ Interested candidates should submit a short paragraph about themselves by noon on Thursday, Sept. 20th for the ballot and voting will take place at Back-to-School Night on September 24thth.~ Write-ups should be sent to PTSO Co-Chair Chris Renzi at [chrisrenzi@comcast.net](mailto:chrisrenzi@comcast.net) or to me at [chardimon@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:chardimon@mail.ab.mec.edu).~ Paper copies may be mailed to RPTSO, P.O. Box 912, Acton, MA 01720, but please confirm with a phone call to our PTSO Co-Chair Jan Couch at 978- 263-2118.

As everyone is aware, the Acton and Acton-Boxborough School Districts have moved to an on-line emergency card system. While many RJG families have completed this form, there are still a number of parents and guardians who have yet to complete this process. If you have not already done so, please follow the directions in the letter you received in August and provide the important information. If you have any questions regarding this process, please call Marcia Charter at 978/264 – 4700 for assistance.

If you have not already done so, mark September 24 on your calendars as our Back To School Night beginning at 7:00PM. For 7th grade parents, please remember to join me at 6:45PM for a brief presentation on the developmental needs of 7th and 8th graders and the various ways the administration, faculty and staff support our students.