



R. J. Grey Junior High School

"Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a different way to stand."

Oprah Winfrey

Grey Matters

Volume 6

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School has begun! 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 is exciting to see and I am looking forward to a wonderful school year.

In welcoming back our staff and students, I would be remiss if I didn't congratulate Head Custodian Bob Daley and all the members of his team for doing an outstanding job preparing the building for the opening 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 professional and dedicated team taking care of our school.

With the opening of school also comes the beginning of the fall sports seasons. As our teams are being selected and season schedules distributed, there are likely to be many questions. This year, our own Physical Education teacher Laura Sikalis has been appointed as the RJG Athletic Director. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding our athletic programs, please do not hesitate to contact Laura at lsikalis@mail.ab.mec.edu.

As a reminder and 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
7 Green	J. Duclos	A. Warren
7 Orange	C. O'Brien	A. Shen
7 Red	M. Dancause	A. Shen
7 Gold	K Chakarian	A. Warren
7 Blue	C. O'Brien	A Shen
8 Green	C. O'Brien	A Warren
8 Orange	M. Dancause	A. Warren
8 Red	K Chakarian	A. Shen
8 Gold	M. Dancause	A. Warren

We are all aware that 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 but 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 ensure 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 allow every student 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 7:30AM and 3:30PM, 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 phone 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 help us by remembering 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 will 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 30th. This evening is a great way to follow your child's schedule, meet your child's teachers, and gain some insight into our child's day. While the evening officially begins at 7PM, I will be meeting with parents of incoming 7th graders prior to classroom visits at 6:45PM. During this meeting, I will talk about the developmental needs of 7th and 8th graders and the various ways the administration, faculty and staff support our students. Regardless of whether or not you are the parent of a 7th grader or an 8th grader, classroom visits will begin at 7:00PM. Throughout the evening, you will have opportunities to learn more about the programs offered at RJG as well.

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.

If you wish to receive my weekly newsletter, Grey Matters, as well as receive the daily announcements and other timely school information and news via this method, please go to our website (<http://ab.mec.edu/rjweb/index.html>) and click on the link "Sign up

for RJ Grey emails", and complete the registration form. Please note that parents and guardians who already completed this new registration form in the spring or earlier this summer do not need to repeat this process.

If you do not have e-mail but wish to receive this newsletter, just send a note to my office either with your child or at the address above. Copies of Grey Matters can also be found on our website.

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. By completing your child's on-line emergency card, you will also have an opportunity to sign up for PTSO related information, opt in or out of school announcements, and more.

Last but not least, many of us are aware that today, September 8th, at 12PM, President Barack Obama delivered a national address to the students of America. The president spoke directly to the nation's children and youth about the importance of persisting and succeeding in school. The president further challenged students to work hard, set educational goals and take responsibility for their learning. At RJ Grey, teachers of all disciplines work to encourage these basic educational goals. Our comprehensive social studies curriculum teaches students about the importance of active citizenship and respecting many different points of view and perspectives. Towards this goal, current events are often integrated into the curriculum to help students begin to think about important complex issues. At RJ Grey, classroom teachers made their own decisions regarding showing this national address live, and students were permitted to opt out of watching. In addition, we taped this address for those teachers who might prefer to review President Obama's speech and consider how it may be integrated into the curriculum at another time. Finally, the national address was available for viewing in the school library as well.

Again, I welcome you to the 2009-10 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!