

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

The purpose of this correspondence is to request your assistance with our district goals and to provide you with a brief update as to our current progress with the goals. Currently there are three [district goals](#) we have been working on. Simply, our focus is on improving academic outcomes, strengthening social emotional results and lastly, making the best use of technology to support these ends.

A strong school-home connection is key in all that we do; as such we are requesting your support in helping us with our district goals by providing your input through survey responses. Our surveys will be distributed to you through emails/Friday Folder messages. Additionally, as we conduct the surveys we will post the links to them on our district homepage. We appreciate that email inboxes are full of requests to complete surveys so we thank you in advance for your assistance in completing those that are from our district. We promise to make the surveys as brief as possible.

Our first survey, the District Technology Survey, will be issued at the end of this week. The district needs to gather feedback from parents with regard to the subject of technology. The scope of the survey includes technology use in the home, access to the internet, the amount of time students use computers or devices to complete school work and so on. The district is also seeking to understand if moving to a one to one (1:1) environment for all or some students should be pursued. A 1:1 environment means that each student would have a computing device to use in class, at home or both. One example of a 1:1 model would be issuing Chromebooks to all high school students to use both at school and at home. Another structure might have a Chromebook for every child to use, but the devices never leave the classroom. A 1:1 environment could be constructed in many ways; however, it obviously would be a significant undertaking with major short-term and long-term financial implications. Therefore, your input is important. Please respond to the District Technology Survey when it is issued to you via email/Friday Folder at the end of this week.

Below is a description of some additional surveys that you can expect to see being administered throughout the remainder of the school year:

- First-Grade Pilot on Standards Based Report Cards: Parents of some first-grade students will be getting a new type of report card on their first-grader's progress in the spring and we will be surveying parents for feedback on the new report card.
- New Courses: The district has several courses running for the first time this year such as American Sign Language and Project Lead the Way classes - we will be seeking feedback on these new offerings.
- Culture and Climate: In the Spring the district will be conducting surveys to gauge culture and climate to help us form approaches to improve the social emotional environment of the schools.

Thank you in advance for responding to the district surveys. Here are some of the other activities we are doing in support of our district goals.

District Goal 1 – Academics

- Continued expansion of the elementary gifted and talented program and telescoped math curriculum
- Introduction of new courses including STEM and STEAM classes at Annin and Ridge
- Introduction of American Sign Language at Ridge
- Staff development through *Grading From the Inside Out* staff college classes and Professional Learning Communities
- Utilization of Title I funds to provide training to first grade teachers on the use of a new reading literacy assessment tool, administration of that tool to collect early indication data
- Purchase of a new student information system (Aspen) to be rolled out in the fall of 2017

District Goal 2 – Social/Emotional

- Growth of school programs such as The Leader in Me and The School Culture/Climate Initiative
- School attendance monitoring project with Dr. Brian Chu from Rutgers University
- Creating inventory of current curricula and programs to find opportunities for enhancements
- Educational opportunities for staff and students:
 - March 1st: Melissa Straub, Internet Safety, all staff in-service and parent meeting at 7:00 p.m. RHS PAC
 - March 8th: Dr. Bush, Teen Social Issues & Suicide Prevention 9:15-11:00 a.m. PTO Meeting at WAMS
 - April 7th: Chris Herren, Substance Abuse, assemblies for RHS students
 - April 19th: Lauren Muriello, Teens & Social Media 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. PTO Meeting at WAMS

District Goal 3 - Technology

- Formation of district wide technology steering committee
- Development of surveys for students, staff and parents
- Planning for site visits in two other school districts
- Steering committee recommendations at year-end

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,



Nick Markarian