



# TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOLS

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December 21, 2023

To our Toms River Regional Schools staff, parents, and families:

Everything about the holidays is focused on kids, and rightly so.

As parents and guardians, do we *want* to navigate car and foot traffic to stand in line for hours at the mall or wherever to visit Santa? Possibly ... or more likely we do it for the kids. Do we *want* to exhaust our savings as the list of people to buy gifts for grows and grows with each passing year? I mean, giving is nice ... but so is a rainy-day fund. Do we *want* to hear “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” for the seventeenth time in the past three days? No, no we do not.

Even the things we **DO** want to do—watch a certain movie, hang a specific decoration, indulge in a family tradition—we mostly do to recapture that childhood magic. It’s all for the kids, even when those kids are us.

I bring this up because the holidays serve as an ideal reminder of our mission here, as leaders in education, and—much more importantly—our purpose as parents, guardians, and people.

Everything we do here, every decision we make has to positively answer one question: Is it good for kids? This question is grounding and endlessly enlightening for me personally, and I know my colleagues and everyone here feels the same. And this, of course, is just an echo of what life asks us each and every day, and particularly at this time of year, as we strive to provide our kids with the happiest and most memorable holiday season we can muster.

The holidays can, like things here within the district (believe it or not!), get complicated, messy, and stressful. Taking a step back and remembering what our children want and need—and, again, what it feels like to be in their shoes and experience the world through their eyes—will always prove to be clarifying.

If it benefits kids, in other words, you better believe we’re going to the mall ... and listening to “Rudolph” all the way there.

It helps to be reminded every now and then of our reason for doing what we do, and there’s no better time to be reminded of what’s true, and right, and truly meaningful than the holiday season. So rest assured that your children, our students, are in good hands, and may you enjoy this special time with them as you celebrate the most special season you can muster.

Happy holidays,

Michael Citta  
Superintendent of Schools