

Superintendent's Update

December 2023

Dear Rye Neck Families,

Blue Ribbon Commission

The New York State Education Department's Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures (BRC) has concluded the work it began in 2019 and made recommendations to the NY State Board of Regents. The Regents are the highest level of organization that sets policy for NY State schools.



The BRC offered some exciting feedback to the Regents to consider, encompassing revamping the high school diploma and credit-accumulation process to provide better opportunities for students, including those with special needs; adding flexibility in assessments, notably a move to become less dependent on traditional testing; and revising learning standards and professional development for teachers. The Regents policy discussions should conclude in Fall of 2024. These potential changes, or at least the related policy discussions, are well-timed to coincide with Rye Neck's strategic planning.

Rye Neck Strategic Plan

The Rye Neck Strategic Planning Team met with our consultant, Judy Wilson, for two full days on November 29th and 30th. The team consists of Board of Education Trustees, parent and community volunteers, students, teachers, and administrators. One significant task was to comb through the thirteen surveys given to our parents, community, staff, and students in November. These surveys asked about topics such as school climate, instruction, student support, technology, safety, communication, and extracurriculars. This information was distilled into three areas of focus for our future goals.

The three goal areas include the intellectual activities and attitudes we want for our school community (the mind); our passion and sense of community, both local and extended (the heart); and the professional learning needed to achieve the student outcomes we want. The team also

spent time streamlining our District Mission Statement to reflect the desired qualities of our community schools and figuratively sketch the "Portrait of a Rye Neck Learner".

Our next task is to begin to develop the action steps that answer the question "what do we have to do to achieve the goal?" for an 18-month period beginning at the end of this school year. We post information related to our [Strategic Planning](#) process on our website. Speaking of websites...

Website Update and Feedback

We would like your input on the next Rye Neck website. We launched a new website in 2021 through Blackboard. However, Blackboard was acquired by Finalsite in 2022 and will no longer support our website's template as of 2025. In the coming months, we will choose a new Finalsite template for a summer 2024 launch. Additionally, Rye Neck is in the process of updating its current app to include more student-specific information, such as our students' schedules, grades, and important documentation.

Our Director of Technology and Communications, Mary Lanza, and the Technology Planning Advisory Team created the [2023 Rye Neck Website Survey](#) to gather feedback from the community that will guide decisions about our new website. The [survey](#) is offered in three languages (English, Japanese, and Spanish); and it includes questions about our current website, the Rye Neck App, and our social media presence. **Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by December 12, 2023.**

Facilities

Our Facilities Planning Advisory Team began unpacking the Building Condition Survey conducted by our architect and presented at the September 20, 2023 Board of Education meeting. Part of the important process of preparing a long-range facilities plan, the team conducted a walkthrough of the MS/HS campus last week and has similar site visits scheduled for Daniel Warren and F.E. Bellows at future meetings. These meetings will be instrumental for presenting our community with building options in the future.

Effective School Solutions

For the 2023-2024 school year, Rye Neck Schools has partnered with Effective School Solutions (ESS) for the direct care of students, faculty presentations, and district self-assessment. ESS is a leader in student and community social-emotional health and care that provides support in seven states and more than 200 school districts. Their 20-plus years working in public school districts to support students and their families bring expertise in therapeutic services, parent support, school-based professional development, and systems development.

We invite you to join us for a series of virtual and in-person parent-centered presentations on mental wellness throughout the year, starting with our inaugural workshops on December 13, 2023. Caring for children can be rewarding while simultaneously emotionally and physically depleting. Building Capacity for Parents: Supporting Adults to Avoid Burnout and Enhance Well-Being will help the important adults in children's lives identify the signs of stress and caregiver fatigue; offer tangible strategies to build their capacity; and enhance their emotional and physical well-being. There will be a virtual presentation at 10:00 AM for parents/caregivers of children in grades K-5 and another at 6:00 PM for parents/caregivers of children in grades 6-12. Parents and caregivers are welcome to attend the session that is most convenient to their schedules. While the workshops will present the same information, the age-specific examples will vary.

Please see this [invitation](#) for more information.

Student Spotlight

In each monthly message, we spotlight high school students who are doing interesting things in or out of school. Based on the relationships our staff members forge with their students and their knowledge of what's going on in their lives, our teachers suggest students for consideration. Mary Lanza, our Director of Technology and Communications, then interviews the students to "get their story." Here are two students for November. **To read about the students, click on the name below their picture.**



[LOGAN BRAVO](#)



[SONALI BROWNING](#)

Staff Spotlight

We also highlight teachers and other staff members each month. Each shares personal reflections on how they got into education, memories from their time as students, and their favorite activities outside of school. For our Staff Spotlights, we wanted to feature the five teachers who participated in our Strategic Planning that had not appeared in a Superintendent's Message so far. **To read about a staff member, click on the name below their picture.**



SUSAN MARKS

F.E. Bellows



ERIKA SODERLUND

F. E. Bellows



KRISTINA SCHLOTE

Middle/High School



IVAN MARTINEZ

Middle/High School



MARK LAUTEN

High School

Winter Season

Our half-day on December 22nd will be our 70th day of school. We return on January 3rd after an 11-day break to continue instruction throughout the winter. We will continue to take advantage of the since-COVID New York State rule allowing us to use inclement weather days for remote learning, but only when necessary and practical. Certain “snow days” should be simple opportunities for children to enjoy all the fun things you can do with snow, while others bring power issues that make virtual connections difficult. Any remote instruction would be conducted on a variation of a 2-hour delay schedule that will be communicated and posted.

Until the unwanted day that I am on a 4:30 AM Zoom with my local colleagues where we ask each other “are you closing?”, I intend to enjoy the winter season. I hope you do as well.

upcoming EVENTS

SEAC Meeting

Tuesday, December 5

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

Rye Neck International Committee Meeting

Friday, December 8

9:15 AM

F.E. Bellows Annex

5th Grade Concert

Monday, December 11

6:00 PM

Booster Club Meeting

Monday, December 11

7:30 PM

HS Library

PTSA/FEB Book Fair

Wednesday, December 13

9:00 AM & 6:00 PM

Thursday, December 14

9:00 AM

HS Holiday Concert

Thursday, December 14

7:00 PM

MS Winter Concert

Wednesday, December 20

5:30 PM

Board of Education Meeting

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

Early Dismissal

Friday, December 22

School Closed - Holiday Recess

Monday, December 25 - Tuesday, January 2

Board of Education Planning Session

Wednesday, January 3

6:30 PM

Collaborative Science Center



Rye Neck Schools

Email: info@ryeneck.org

Website: www.ryeneck.org

Phone: [914-777-5200](tel:914-777-5200)

Facebook: facebook.com/ryeneckschools

Twitter: [@ryeneckschools](https://twitter.com/ryeneckschools)



Rye Neck Schools

Rye is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters