

Superintendent's Update

January 2024

Dear Rye Neck Families,

Happy New Year!

Welcome back to our students, staff, and families. As of today, we are only 14 days shy of the midway point between our first and last school days of the year. I'm always excited to set some exercise and diet resolutions for the new year but, in truth, evidence suggests that I'm often too ambitious with my goals. "6-pack abs" elude me. I still seem to have only one collective singular ab, and I'm easily enticed by baked goods. However, this past year I made progress with time management and organization, limiting those times of multitasking by using my calendar more effectively for planning and closing my email while I work. I think the most important thing annual New Year's resolutions teach us is persistence! On that note, persistence and longevity of action are part of our strategic planning goals...



Rye Neck Strategic Plan

We kick off the new year with the second stage of our Strategic Planning Process. Based on the initial work completed by our Rye Neck Strategic Planning Team and our consultant, Judy Wilson, three school-based "Action Plan Teams" were formed. Each team will take one of the three district goals created in November and answer the question "What do we have to do to achieve the goal?" The teams will work on these, as well as a new version of our Rye Neck Mission Statement and a "Portrait of a Rye Neck Learner" throughout the winter and spring. The overall aim is to have the three goals finalized and ready for implementation by July 1st of this year. Progress will be reported throughout the second half of the year.

An interesting aspect of one of the strategic goals is learning the value of *process* and not just *product*. I'm particularly eager to see how we develop this point, the struggle between checking a box and actually accomplishing something, getting the homework done versus learning a skill or acquiring knowledge, or any other example that highlights the real value of an effort. This is an exciting process and is the perfect opportunity to put our persistence to the test.

Mental Wellness

Rye Neck's partnership with Effective School Solutions has given us a variety of advantages in our effort to improve the mental wellness of our school community. These include on-campus clinical support for students with an identified need; in-depth guidance for our regular student support meetings; professional development for our staff, and parent workshops.

The first of a series of parent workshops, Building Capacity for Parents: Supporting Adults to Avoid Burnout and Enhance Well-Being, took place on December 13th with times for both the K-5 and 6-12 age groups. Prior to the workshop, ESS had said the sessions "will help the important adults in children's lives identify the signs of stress and caregiver fatigue and offer tangible strategies to build their capacity and enhance their emotional and physical well-being." I was pleased by the tone and content of the workshops because they seemed relevant to all of us. When a quote attributed to Viktor Frankl was cited I reflected on how close the message was to that of our RULER Approach. "Between the stimulus and response, there is a space. And in that space lies our freedom and power to choose our responses. In our response lies our growth and our freedom". For our RULER students, this is the "meta-moment" where we remind them to think before acting. As adults trying to role model behavior despite challenges from all angles, the ESS message about self-care and knowledge of what we can and cannot control is critical.

The workshops were recorded and a link will be posted on our website shortly. The next scheduled Parent PD/Workshops will be on January 16th as a district-wide virtual session at 9:00 AM on the topic of Supporting Students with Stress and Excessive Worry for Parents and Care Givers and on January 18th as a Spanish language in-person session

Desarrollar capacidades para los padres: Apoyar a los adultos para evitar el agotamiento y mejorar el bienestar at 6:00 PM. Niños que vengan con sus padres están invitados a participar en la noche de STEM (también en el High School). Esperamos ver a todos ahí. Future parent workshops will also be held in March and May.

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 first two students for 2024. **To read about the students, click on the name below their picture.**

*Thanks to the idea from these two students, we are now offering translated versions of the student spotlight in Japanese and Spanish. The links to those languages are posted in each student's write up.



[ELIZABETH CASTILLO](#)



[JIAN KAWAI](#)

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. Here are our staff members for the New Year. **To read about a staff member, click on the name below their picture.**



[CAITLIN CLARKE](#)

Daniel Warren



[LAUREN WOLMAN](#)

F.E. Bellows (Just retired!)



TERESA CASTALDO

Middle School

*the best
Teachers
are those
who show you
where to
look
but don't tell
you what to
see.*



VERONICA FARACI

High School

upcoming **EVENTS**

RNIC Meeting

Tuesday, January 8

9:15 AM

FEB Annex

Applying for ACT/SAT Accommodations Meeting for Special Ed Students

Thursday, January 11

6:30 PM

MS/HS Community Room

JR College Planning Night (English)

Thursday, January 11

7:00 PM

MS/HS PAC

JR College Planning Night (Spanish)

Thursday, January 11

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

K-2 Principals' Conversation

Friday, January 12

9:15 AM

DW Auditorium

School Closed - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Monday, January 15

ESS Professional Development for 6-12 Parents - Virtual

Tuesday, January 16

9:00 AM

Virtual

PTSA General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, January 16

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

Board of Education Meeting

Wednesday, January 17

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

ESS Professional Development for K-5 Parents - (Spanish-Speaking Presentation)

Tuesday, January 16

6:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

PTSA/MS Activity Night

Friday, January 19

6:00 PM

MS Gym

Booster Club Meeting

Monday, January 22

7:30 PM

MS/HS Library

Booster Club Harlem Wizards Event

Friday, January 26

7:00 PM

Board of Education Planning Session

Wednesday, January 31

6:30 PM

Collaborative Science Center

Rye Neck Schools



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



Rye Neck Schools