

Superintendent's Update

March 2024

Dear Rye Neck Families,

March is always a happy transitional period in schools. Daylight Saving Time begins this coming weekend on March 10th so that we can “spring ahead” and the equinox that officially brings spring occurs on March 19th. Punxutawney Phil said we should enjoy some nice weather, so we are excited about the start of the varsity spring athletics season on March 11th and our Spring Recess on March 23rd. The third marking period concludes for grades 6-12 on April 12th, signaling a thrilling time for our senior class as they embark on their internships. I only wish HS musical season wasn't over because the cast and crew gave us a gem with *Beauty and the Beast*.



Rye Neck Strategic Plan

Last month I shared the Strategic Planning Goals which will guide us as we reorient our thinking on the priorities of education. To empower our students to be successful both as individuals and as part of any community, Rye Neck will:

- Equip all learners to approach problems by asking questions, exploring solutions, taking action, and reflecting on outcomes.
- Build transformative environments that foster empathy, compassion, and connection to the world. Create learning experiences that instill a sense of purpose inside and outside of the classroom.
- Design systems for our professional learning community to develop practices and expertise that lead to transformational experiences for themselves and their students.

As our three Action Plan teams continue their work mapping out the steps for this overhaul (they meet again on March 5th, for example), we look forward to a whole-faculty discussion of the new Rye Neck Mission Statement and goals on March 8th. The mission statement was generated by our community-school group in November and represents a more focused, direct means of guidance as we shape the near-future of the district:

Our Mission: Rye Neck is a close-knit school community that values local and global voices. We are committed to providing a learning journey that inspires an adaptive mindset and enables all learners to thrive academically and personally.

Superintendent's Conference Day

What are we doing at school while our students are at home? New York State school calendar rules allow for up to four "Superintendent's Conference Days" during the school year. These are staff-only days that allow for concentrated staff time beyond the often brief and rushed meetings at the beginning or end of school days. Rye Neck usually holds two SC days at the end of August, one on Election Day in November, and one in March.

On Friday, March 8th, Rye Neck teachers will be engaged in a variety of activities both as a district-wide group at the MS/HS campus and at their specific schools. These activities include a K-12 session on our Strategic Plan, where teachers will begin to unpack and more deeply understand the goals of the plan; what the district should look like in five years after achievement of our goals; and our new Mission Statement.

The faculty will also participate in training, meeting, and planning for subjects not limited to our new K-5 Eureka2 math, reading assessments, departmentalizing science and social studies in grades 3 through 5, horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment, integrated co-teaching planning, the Civic Seal of Readiness, concert planning, and staff safety.

Budget and Trustee Vote

Spring is about more than good weather and student events. A reminder: Tuesday, May 21st, is the annual voting day for both our 2024-25 district operating budget and our Board of Education trustee election. In addition to the annual budget, the community will have the opportunity to vote on the use of our Capital Reserve Fund to address elements of the building condition survey identified by our district architects as needing attention at our September Board of Education meeting.

Although use of the Capital Reserve Fund does not require any further levying of taxes, voter authorization is required to use the fund for project work.

Our next budget presentations are on Wednesday, March 13th and Wednesday, April 17th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Community Room, followed by a final budget hearing on May 8th at 9:00 AM at Daniel Warren. In addition to these opportunities, all budget information is available by clicking [Budget 2023-2024](#) under the "Our District" tab on our website.

Each year there are two Board of Education seats open for full three-year terms. This year, the current three-year terms of Board members Rebecca Mansell and Patty Nashelsky will expire. Candidates seeking to become a Board of Education member must be nominated by petition. Candidates should contact District Clerk Mary Ellen Chiera at mchiera@ryeneck.org or 914-777-5252 to obtain the petition and any other required materials. Each petition shall be filed with the District Clerk not later than 4:00 PM on April 22, 2024.

ESS

The *twice* rescheduled date (due to poor weather in January and February) for the Effective Schools Solutions parent virtual workshop "Supporting Students with Stress and Excessive Worry" is Thursday, March 7th at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Meeting links will be posted on our website if you would like to attend.

New CDC Guidance

On Friday, March 1st, the CDC released [updated recommendations](#) for how people can protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including but not limited to, COVID-19. The new guidance is a unified approach to addressing risks from a range of common respiratory viral illnesses, such as COVID-19, flu, and RSV. The CDC states that they are “making updates to the recommendations now because the U.S. is seeing far fewer hospitalizations and deaths associated with COVID-19 and because we have more tools than ever to combat flu, COVID, and RSV.”

The guidance still stresses vaccination, hygiene, ventilation, and use of masks, tests, and distancing when applicable. The main difference is that an automatic five-day isolation is no longer recommended after a positive test. Rather, the duration of isolation now depends on symptoms and timing of a fever:

You can go back to your normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, **both** are true:

- Your symptoms are getting better overall, and
- You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication)

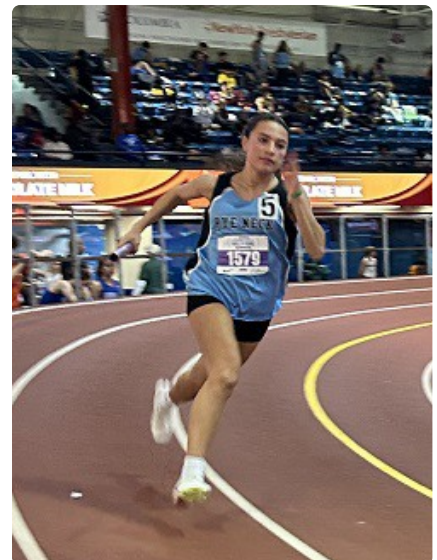
As usual, you should call your pediatrician or school nurse if you have any questions.

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 March. **To read about the students, click on the name below their picture.**



[SAMINA QULI](#)



[NINA VIENNE](#)

Staff Spotlight

We also like to 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. Our March spotlights feature some of the leaders of our teachers’ association. **To read about a staff member, click on the name below their picture.**



MADELINE BIEGEN

Daniel Warren



LIZ LEIFERT

F.E. Bellows



KATHIE OFFNER

Middle School



MELISSA SILVA

MS/HS

upcoming

EVENTS

DW Science Fair

Wednesday, March 6

5:00 PM

ESS Parent Workshop: Supporting Students with Worry and Stress

Thursday, March 7th

9:30 AM - VIRTUAL

4th Grade Concert

Thursday, March 7th

6:00 PM

FEB Auditorium

Superintendent's Conference Day - STAFF ONLY

Friday, March 8th

Booster Club Meeting

Monday, March 11

7:30 PM

MS/HS Library

RNIC Meeting

Wednesday, March 13

9:15 AM

F.E. Bellows Annex

Board of Education Meeting/Second Budget Presentation

Wednesday, March 13

7:00 PM

MS/HS Community Room

Modified Sports Information Meeting for 7th & 8th Graders

Tuesday, March 19th

3:00 PM

MS/HS Dining Hall

PTSA K-2 Playdate/Sports Equipment Exchange

Wednesday, March 20th

3:00 PM

DW Playground

PTSA/DW Family Fitness Night

Thursday, March 21st

5:00 PM

DW Gymnasium

NO SCHOOL - Spring Recess

Monday, March 25 - Friday, March 29



Rye Neck Schools

Email: info@ryeneck.org

Website: www.ryeneck.org

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

Facebook: facebook.com/ryeneckschools

Instagram: [@ryeneckschools](https://instagram.com/ryeneckschools)

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



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