

# Superintendent's Update

*June 2023*

Dear Rye Neck Families,

Since my last monthly letter, Rye Neck passed its 2023-24 school year budget on May 16th. This was the 12th consecutive time we proposed a budget that serves our students without asking to exceed the 2% tax levy cap and we were rewarded with an 82.8% passing rate. I want to reiterate my thanks to our community for the support that allows us to prioritize student learning, the fun things that create great school memories for our students, and other elements of contemporary school life such as mental wellness and security. I also want to thank and commend the teachers, other staff members, and administrators who have been the foundation for a superior school experience. Last, I want to thank the six trustees of our Board of Education who contribute innumerable volunteer hours to the stewardship of our district.



## **Spring Success: Athletics and Theater**

One of the things our budget supports is extracurricular activities and our students have certainly taken advantage of that. In athletics, every one of our varsity sports this spring achieved the postseason in some way, with softball, baseball, boys and girls lacrosse, and boys tennis qualifying as teams. Additionally, individual athletes in tennis, golf, and track & field qualified for postseason play. Some of those students are still competing in June.

In theater, we learned that our HS Musical production of *Anastasia* earned *eleven* nominations for the Metro Awards. The Metropolitan High School Theatre Awards represents four counties and will celebrate the winners at their awards ceremony on June 12th. Our eleven nominations comprise seven student awards, two staff awards, a chorus award, and of course a nomination for best overall production. Congratulations to all!

## **Events and Activities**

The first and last months of school are often the busiest times of our year. Incredibly, here we are in June again. Please see our school newsletters, school social media, and our website to map out your time amidst all the excitement.

## Staff Spotlight

I hope you have enjoyed getting to know some of our staff members from around the district a little bit better. This is our final quartet for the year. Each shares personal reflections on how they got into education, memories from their time as students, and their favorite activities outside of school.

To read about a staff member, click on the name below their picture.



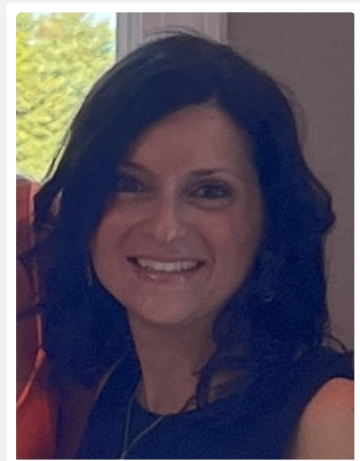
**LAUREN D'ALE SANDRO**

Daniel Warren Teacher



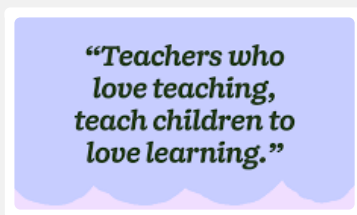
**SUE COMBS**

F. E. Bellows Teacher



**ROSINA MARTINELLI**

Middle/High School Teacher



**KARA SLATTERY**

High School Teacher

## Programs and Priorities

We are hosting our second "Programs and Priorities" meeting at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, June 7th in the MS/HS Dining Hall. This meeting is for parents of students in grades 6-12, although any elementary parents who missed the K-5 meeting on May 3rd are still welcomed. These meetings are opportunities to provide input on what we should include in our long-range plans and future budgets. Areas you might consider beforehand include our campuses, facilities, services, curricular topics,

extracurricular opportunities, community relations, safety and security, or any other item you think worthy of consideration. Our Board of Education's Planning Session will immediately follow Programs and Priorities.

## School Security

At our last Board of Education meeting, F. E. Bellows principal Mike Scarantino and I presented information on our District Safety Plan. That [safety presentation](#) is available on our website. These days, a school safety plan bears little resemblance to the simple fire drill memo that my own elementary school probably had. Ours contains everything from weather emergencies (Ida) to biological emergencies (COVID-19) to adversarial (swatting). Since our last big biological issue was MRSA in 2007, COVID was a great example of how planning for the last emergency doesn't necessarily prepare you for the next. Therefore, I think the real lesson is having a nimble mindset that allows you to be prepared for many eventualities. To that end, our safety plan is less a set of written rules, but rather a flexible compact in which we agree to have our minds open to best practices, always looking to improve.

Over the past month and half, I have gotten inquiries from parents, both those interested in more visible signs of security and those wary of the psychological impacts of security in a school building. With both of those perspectives in mind, and with the realities of accomplishing the dual goals of education and providing a safe environment, we continue a progressive approach to layering security in an educational setting.

New to our plans for this past year are the use of a security consultant; use of a security guard company that can provide staff with a law enforcement background; a new security position at our Athletic Center; additional cameras in all buildings; door handle replacements and changes in student ID procedures at the HS/MS; and increased police presence in our buildings.

For next year, we have bolstered our mental wellness capabilities regarding threat prevention; added Narcan for overdose prevention; purchased a new walkie-talkie system for both management and emergency communication; expanded plans with the police for campus training; improved the entry screening tools for visitors; and allocated resources for physical improvements at our HS entrance, MS/HS student sidewalks, and new doors at both DW and FEB.

We are also researching options for physical enhancements to windows, interior doors, and technology that provides improved camera surveillance. We exposed a broader group of staff members to external trainings this year and will incorporate those lessons into our building plans. Our safety plans at both the district and building level are "living documents" in that we don't wait for the annual document updates before we make improvements: safety and security is a year-round concern and we will continue the progress we have been making over the past several years.

Best regards,  
Dr. Eric Lutinski  
Superintendent of Schools

A graphic with a grey background and blue borders. The word "upcoming" is written in a light blue, cursive font at the top left. Below it, the word "EVENTS" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, with each letter contained within a blue square. The squares are arranged in a row and have a slight 3D effect with shadows.

# upcoming EVENTS

## **Board of Education Planning Session/Middle & High School Programs & Priorities Meeting**

Wednesday, June 7

6:30 PM

Middle/High School Dining Hall

## **3rd Grade Concert**

Thursday, June 8

6:00 PM

FEB Auditorium

## **Elementary Theater Productions**

Saturday, June 10

12:00 PM & 2:30 PM

Middle/High School PAC

## **Senior Car Parade**

Monday, June 12

10:30 AM

Middle/High School Campus

## **Varsity Sports Award Ceremony**

Monday, June 12

5:00 PM

Middle/High School Dining Hall

## **Kindergarten Flag Day Concert**

Wednesday, June 14

9:15 AM

Daniel Warren Auditorium

## **Board of Education Meeting**

Wednesday, June 14

7:00 PM

Middle/High School Dining Hall

## **5th Grade Moving Up Ceremony**

Thursday, June 15

9:30 AM

FEB Fields

### 5th Grade Moving Up Ceremony - RAIN DATE

Friday, June 16

9:30 AM

FEB Fields

### SCHOOL CLOSED - JUNETEENTH

Monday, June 19

### High School Graduation

Tuesday, June 20

5:30 PM

Middle/High School Football Field

### 8th Grade Moving Up Ceremony

Wednesday, June 21

1:00 PM

High School Gymnasium

### High School Graduation - RAIN DATE

Thursday, June 22

5:30 PM

Middle/High School Football Field




## Rye Neck Schools

 Facebook

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