

VALUE Education

Superintendent's Notebook

by Barbara Ferraro, Ed.D.

Dear Rye Neck Families,

I have shared countless remarks in my career. Often, these focused on students, families and staff in recognition of achievement milestones and numerous other honors. However, these words are the most challenging to write because the task is personal. I have made the decision to end my long career in education by retiring from Rye Neck at the end of this school year.



It has been hard to say those words to myself these past several months as I contemplated the gravity of moving into the next chapter of my life. It is so difficult to tear myself away from a professional journey spanning 50 years that brought me great joy every day as a teacher, building leader and superintendent of schools.

In 1990, I came to Rye Neck as your high school principal. Immediately, I understood and appreciated how this close-knit and caring community was the foundation for strong schools. Over the course of the next 30 years, I had the good fortune to work with remarkable Boards of Education, talented administrators, outstanding faculty and staff and a wonderful group of parents and students, all of whom I consider my extended family. I am proud to say that collectively we raised the bar for Rye Neck students and provided boundless opportunities for each and every one to learn and grow and realize their personal best.

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An Update From the Board of Education

by Jennifer Rubin, President

Dear Rye Neck Community,

I am happy to report that as we embark on this holiday season, Rye Neck schools have made it through the first quarter of the year in generally good shape.

Like every other school district nationwide, we have faced enormous challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we have an instructional plan in place that is flexible enough to allow us to pivot between our already existing in-person hybrid model to full remote instruction as circumstances change. Steadfast, our hardworking, excellent teachers and dedicated parent partners help to make these modifications as smooth as possible to maintain successful learning for all of our students.

In the midst of working hard to keep our schools open and our construction project progressing, our Board was also tasked with planning for a very important responsibility. At our Nov. 18 Board of Education meeting, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Barbara Ferraro announced her plan to retire from Rye Neck (and her long public education career) on June 30, 2021. Dr. Ferraro has worked in our district for nearly 30 years as a longtime high school principal and assistant superintendent before she began as superintendent in January of 2017.



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Now, three decades later, this is a bittersweet moment for me. I was welcomed into the Rye Neck family with open arms and that feeling has never left. As a result, it will be very hard to say goodbye in June, because not only do I care deeply about the families I have worked with over the years, but also because education has been my life's work and my life's joy.

However, I know in my heart that personally this is the right time for me to retire and the right time for the school district to transition to a new leader. I will do everything I can over the next seven months to assist the Board and the community to make the transition a highly effective process. Additionally, we still have much to do over the coming months as we move into the final phases of the capital project and continue to address the everchanging landscape of teaching and learning during the pandemic.

I feel so fortunate to have spent a major part of my career in a district that supports its schools as generously as does the Rye Neck community. When I think back on the past years, fond memories flood my mind. I have had the privilege to work with generations of students from the time they entered elementary school through high school graduation and the distinct honor of celebrating with families all those major milestones in every student's life. Welcoming so many graduates back home to Rye Neck to raise their families is one of my greatest joys. Each time this occurs, it makes me feel like a parent filled with pride and admiration for the adults they've become.

Rye Neck is a truly special place. Thank you for making me a part of Rye Neck, and most importantly, thank you for your trust and partnership. In looking for a way to say goodbye, the words of Helen Keller came to mind: "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Rye Neck will forever hold that special place.

Warm wishes for a peaceful and safe holiday season.

Sincerely,
Dr. Barbara Ferraro

News From the School Counseling Department

What was it like to be back at school after nearly six months? The answer: great. After all the disruption, our students came back to school kinder, more generous, more considerate and more resilient than ever before. They wear their masks without complaint, comply with a multitude of new behaviors and often express appreciation for the relationships and opportunities that they missed so much. Seeing familiar faces (yes, covered in masks) and experiencing the energy and warmth of our school community was a relief and a joy for all of us. In the hallways, there were lots of hellos and knowing glances – we were back and going to make this work. Now, three months later, a reflection is in order.

To understand our young people's responses to the pandemic, social unrest and a big dose of family life, it is important to see their generation in context. Our high school students view boundaries differently from all previous generations – they are intelligent, action-oriented and compassionate – they inform themselves well and they expect to be inclusive and collaborative leaders. Animated by the examples of Greta Thunberg, age 17, and the Parkland teens, our students are laser focused on what is most important to their futures. This was evident throughout school closure as they spearheaded a staggering amount of community service, stood up for social justice, launched TEDxRyeNeckHigh #Climate online, gracefully accepted losses of sports seasons and made the best of online events. The lesson here is this: Do not underestimate the power of our children and take heart; they are able to face adversity with courage and meet the challenges ahead with flying colors.

Yes, it was not surprising that there were some fears about college applications among teens. Yet, as college application season took off, students looked to a future full of opportunities that they are primed to take. Freshman Seminar made it clear how much our newest high school students have grown since their virtual moving-up ceremony last spring. Our middle and elementary school students have demonstrated remarkable flexibility and aplomb as they navigated the responsibilities of learning at school and at home. What stands out the most is the love that they have shown us and the inspiration that provides. Parents and guardians, you have raised a group of young people to be proud of, and we are grateful to be part of your lives.

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An Update From the Board of Education

by Jennifer Rubin, President

Since first learning of Dr. Ferraro's intention to retire last August, the Board of Education began planning for the transition in a careful and methodical manner. Our thoughtful discussions allowed us to distinctly define the professional attributes that we believe our next leader should possess. In early October, we evaluated potential regional and national search consultants, and later in the month conducted formal interviews with compelling finalists.

The Board selected Dr. Harold Coles from Southern Westchester BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) to lead our search. He brings to the table extensive advertising and recruitment experience as well as regional and national outreach which we believe will be critical in attaining a highly qualified and diverse pool of candidates. Dr. Coles will work in concert with Michael Conte, a longtime educational adviser and consultant who will assist with the identification, screening and interviewing of potential candidates.

An online survey has been distributed to families, and later this month, Dr. Coles will conduct stakeholder group meetings with teachers, students, clerical and custodial staff, administrators and the PTSA to learn more about the district's operational dynamics through its organizational structure. Recruitment materials will be distributed soon, and in the new year, the vetting process will begin. The plan is to complete candidate interviews with finalists by the end of March and select a new superintendent sometime in April, who will then begin to work in our schools by July 1, 2021.

In line with the likes of the year 2020, sizable changes are on the horizon, but one thing that will remain constant is our dedication to providing high-quality educational opportunities for all of our students.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I thank our community for its continuous support of our children and the Rye Neck school district. Warmest wishes to everyone for a healthy and joyful holiday season.

PTSA News

Thank you to our Rye Neck community which once again made the PTSA Ribbon Fundraiser a great success. This year, ribbons read "Rye Neck Together" – a testament to the strength of this community when we stand together. We raised over \$30,000 and our school pride was strong throughout our community.

While the school year is very different, the PTSA has been able to shift many programs to a virtual platform and is still happy to support the district with the Rye Y recess program, STEAM programming, author visits and Health and Wellness initiatives.

Support the PTSA while shopping for the holidays this season. The PTSA is a charitable organization on AmazonSmile. When you shop through AmazonSmile (which is identical to Amazon.com), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the cost of eligible purchases to the Rye Neck PTSA. You only have to register once and then bookmark the page. Also, the DeCicco's fundraiser has gone digital. Please get a card from DeCicco's and register it at www.deciccoandsons.com/school-rebate-program/, click on contributor card enrollment form, then click on Rye Neck PTA to earn money for our district every time you shop. Every dollar counts.

The Rye Neck PTSA is the largest parent-run organization in the district. Every person that becomes a member contributes to the funding that we provide for our children. If you have not already done so, please join us.

Thank you for your continued support of the Rye Neck PTSA. Best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season.

Laurel Ryan, PTSA President



News From the Athletic Department

The fall athletic season was one we will never forget for two reasons. First, for the many challenges and obstacles COVID-19 presented our athletes, coaches and community. Secondly, for the resilience, determination, flexibility and mental toughness our athletes, coaches and families demonstrated. Over 65 athletic contests at the JV and varsity levels were played, and each varsity team competed in a postseason event. We were also able to run a successful intramural program for seventh and eighth graders over a five-week period.

Highlights from the fall athletic season include:

- The following girls tennis players qualified for Section 1's Southern Westchester Small School Region Tennis Championships.
 - * **Singles Draw**
 - Lucy Friedman, a No. 1 seed, went on to win the Singles Championship.
 - Dylan White placed third.
 - Elona Sebbane.
 - Lucy Friedman went on to win the Singles Tournament and capture the Section 1 Small School Regional Championship.
 - * **Doubles Draw**
 - Katie Lipman and Carolina Doherty, No. 2 seed.
 - Amadea Toutoungis and Mako Ikeda.
 - Abigail Heaton and Lily Peterson.
 - Katie Lipman and Carolina Doherty placed third in the doubles tournament.
- The following cross-country runners qualified for Section 1's Southern Westchester Small School Region Cross-Country Championship Race:
 - * Will Brennan, Matthias Lauvau, Joe Lavelle, Andrew Ricci, Linus Ringstad, Matthew Steeves, Colin Stone, Micah Taffet.
 - * The team finished in fifth place, and Joe Lavelle medaled by placing 10th individually.
- The varsity boys soccer team earned the No. 5 seed in Section 1's Southern Westchester Small School Region Soccer Championship.
- The varsity field hockey team earned the No. 1 seed in Section 1's Southern Westchester Small School Region Field Hockey Championship.
- The varsity girls soccer team earned the No. 4 seed in Section 1's Southern Westchester Small School Region Soccer Championship.
- Senior tennis standout Lucy Friedman was selected as a ConEd Scholar-Athlete Award recipient. She is the 58th Panther to win this prestigious award.
- Senior girls lacrosse standout Julia DeLitta signed a National Letter of Intent to continue her academic and lacrosse careers at Lehigh University.



Rye Neck Booster Club

The Rye Neck Booster Club is about community, spirit and our children. We strive to build school spirit by supporting the athletic, musical and other initiatives at Rye Neck. Although social distancing requirements put a damper on our usual autumn programs and events, the Booster Club has worked hard creating opportunities to lift spirits and boost Panther pride – which are needed now more than ever.

Our traditional homecoming didn't happen this year, but Panther Spirit was alive at the high school for Spirit Week and fall sport Senior Days. Members of the Class of 2021 were presented with a commemorative T-shirt in celebration of their final year at Rye Neck. Our Spirit Contest gave families from all four schools a chance to get creative and show their Panther pride.

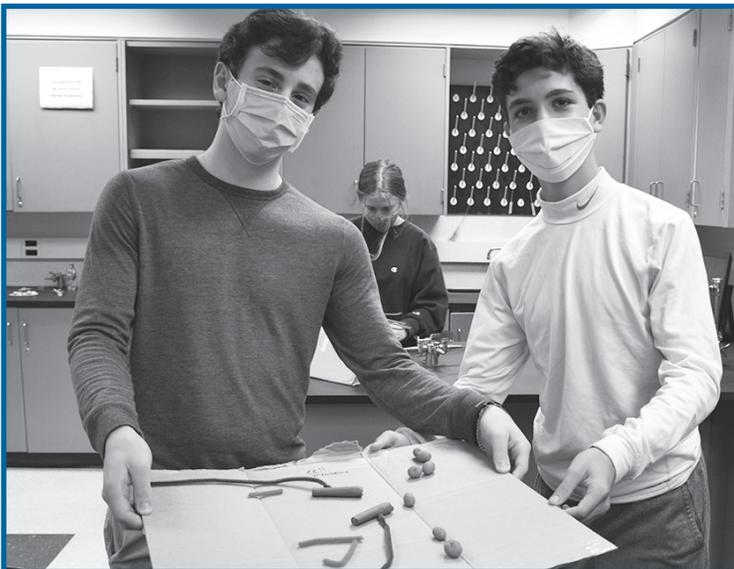
Regarding sporting events, COVID-19 restrictions have limited the number of spectators, which has been a disappointment for players, their friends and families alike. To show support for our athletes, the Booster Club launched a FANatic cutout campaign. Over 60 diehard Rye Neck fans participated in the fall season and were friendly, supportive faces at the home games through the playoffs. We hope to continue this campaign – keep your eyes open for a chance to get your own FANatic cutout for the upcoming winter, fall 2 and spring seasons.

Halloween was especially spirited this year. The Booster

Club ensured each Rye Neck student received a Halloween treat and Rye Neck decal at school. In addition, we created a bit of fun and mystery with our new “You’ve Been BOO-stered!” campaign, through which the Rye Neck community had the opportunity to anonymously send tricks and/or treats to their friends, family and neighbors. Our blow-up Panther and spirit signs popped up in unexpected places all through Rye Neck, and Booster Club volunteers delivered delicious cookie and cupcake treats from local shops ready to decorate and be devoured. Our Panther Prowl daily raffles, dedicated to the F.E. Bellows and Daniel Warren students, helped generate excitement and anticipation among our younger children, who kept their eyes peeled for glimpses of our own local “black cat.” Halloween fun combined with Panther pride brought a lot of smiles to the community.

The Rye Neck Booster Club wishes to thank all those who helped make these initiatives so successful: volunteers, participants and contributors. We're all volunteers who like to have fun doing what we do. If you haven't already, we hope that you will consider joining us. We have lots more in store for this winter and spring, and we welcome all ideas. For more information, please visit our website at ryeckboosterclub.com.

The Booster Club wishes the Rye Neck community health, happiness and peace this holiday season! Stay Panther Strong. We are Rye Neck.



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Dear Rye Neck Resident

Administration: 914-777-5252

Dr. Barbara Ferraro, Superintendent
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance

