

BOE Meeting, August 23rd, 2023

Superintendent's Remarks

Thank you President Mansell, and good morning.

I hope everyone enjoyed the summer and welcome back to Rye Neck. Our administrators are all back in the office, our clerical staff is preparing communications, schedules, and coordinating everything else necessary to begin the year, and our custodians and grounds crew are putting the finishing touches on our facilities.

Since a strong foundation is always important, we concentrated on flooring improvements this summer. F. E. Bellow's old wooden classroom floors were replaced by vinyl tile; the Daniel Warren nurse's office received the same new flooring and some new fixtures; the HS Gym floor was stripped, relined, and refinished; and, the big job was in the High School's E-Corridor, where the floors have settled over the last 70 years. Structural foam was applied to fill small voids and stabilize the floor and the wing received new tile. Also, the district's Registration Office, located near the High School office, was expanded, creating a more welcoming space for our new arrivals.

We have had a recent setback in that same high school E-Corridor. An old water fountain pipe, capped and buried in the wall decades ago, burst in the late hours of August 10th. It flooded much of E-corridor, the student lounge and supply closet area, the new registration office, and both the Counseling suite and the Principal's office. Our staff addressed the issue immediately, mitigation specialists were hired, the cleanup is complete, and the repair is underway. The people who work in those offices have been assigned temporary workspaces, but I want to stress that the classrooms are finished and ready for the return of students on September 5th. I want to particularly thank our Head of Buildings and Grounds Angelo Labrusciano and Senior Custodian Pat Carolini for their handling of the incident and making sure there is no interruption of instruction, and Assistant Superintendent Carolyn Mahar for orchestrating a rapid response.

Staffing is always a key activity every new year, and between the spring and summer we have so far hired at least 20 new employees, including 3 monitors, 5 teaching assistants, 3 security guards, a counselor, and 8 teachers. That does not include the new coaches that join our teams every year or those joining us to temporarily replace staff on leave. We will welcome all of them at our new staff orientation on August 28th and 29th, when they will get a crash course on essentials, and take a guided bus tour of our community. Our veteran staff returns on August 30th to prepare for our students the following week. Of course our Athletic Department has already begun the year, with 270 varsity and JV fall sport athletes practicing today,

thanks to our nursing staff clearing *them* and an additional 100 modified athlete registrations for September.

A big change, as President Mansell mentioned, involves our high school principal. I want to congratulate Dr. Tina Wilson on her new job. Dr. Wilson is now Port Chester's new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and will have an opportunity for bigger-picture systems work. Even through the bizarre period of pandemic instruction Tina had a level head and was always fun to work with when we were principal-partners in the building. I will especially miss her quick problem-solving and her sense of humor. This is Tina's last day as a Panther, so we wish her well as a Ram.

That means we also congratulate our Interim HS Principal, Ms. Melinda Folchetti. Her decades of service as a high school teacher have earned her the respect of students, parents, and staff. Ms. Folchetti's experience, skill set, and administrative license make her the perfect candidate for Rye Neck High School. We welcome her to the administration team.

Finally, we talked a great deal about safety and security at the end of last year. We received parent feedback from different angles, from those who wanted more visible signs of security to those who want to preserve the openness of traditional school campuses. Rye Neck has invested in personnel, technological, and structural safety improvements and we can accomplish both aims.

Each of our three campuses will now have a security team member with law enforcement experience rather than just one districtwide, plus two additional people with security experience at the MS/HS. We have expanded safety teams, more extensive staff training, and will provide clearer communication for students and families. The increased presence by both the Village of Mamaroneck and Rye City Police departments, during lockdown drills and randomly during the school day, has improved emergency coordination.

Rye Neck made some technological changes as well. These changes include the latest visitor screening systems at each building's main entrance; greater staff access to our silent alarm system; a new walkie-talkie system with range to allow communication across the district; and a new fire alert system at Daniel Warren. Some items ordered months ago are still in the supply chain and we are poised for installation as they arrive. Those items include security doors for the elementary schools, interior door hardware to allow automatic locking of instructional and office spaces, and new exterior card readers for more secure entryways districtwide. Last, we have met with our district architects during the spring and summer to advance our safety projects for both the new High School entryway and the new front parking lot and bike path.