

# BOE Meeting, February 14, 2024

## Superintendent's Remarks

### Strategic Planning

The first of my three items is one I just referred to in our presentation, specifically our Strategic Plan. Thanks to the combined efforts of our school and community team paving the way for our work, we have established our future goals for the 18-month period beginning in July of this year. As of that time Rye Neck as a district 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

These goals were created to enable our students to thrive academically and personally.

The current work to position us for a July 1st start is in the hands of our three Action Plan Teams, each a group of volunteer staff members co-chaired by one administrator and one teacher. They have been meeting to establish their process, collect data, research, and resources and are responsible for answering the question “What do we have to do to achieve this goal?” As we progress from winter into spring, the teams will be soliciting input from our students, parents, and fellow staff members to hone their action steps into a blueprint for each goal. We will continue to share information about the plan in our school communications from me and our principals.

### Snow Days

This is a well-timed meeting coming the day after a big storm. Monday evening I made the choice to close school and have a remote learning day on Tuesday. I had made mention of that possibility in my December Superintendent's message and our principals had it in their weeklies, but still I thank our teachers and administrators, our parents, and of course our students for their cooperative problem-solving efforts.

New York State adopted the practice of allowing schools to deliver remote instruction to carry on their primary mission in the face of bad weather, facilities issues, communicable diseases, or a threat against a school-- and we have closed for all but the last. “Snow day” is slang, but really a catch-all for “emergency day”. Reserving emergency days is a wise step in planning a calendar and the state has deliberately offered us situational flexibility.

In making the determination for any snow day I consult the DPW and police, and our Sound Shore superintendents usually meet to share information. My decision on Monday evening was based on several factors. Most importantly, we have a week off coming up-- and, by the way, only 19 school days until spring break after that. A day off Tuesday would have forced some MS and HS teachers in particular to make choices that would not favor their students. Second, we had the ability to communicate the evening before and not spring a morning announcement on everyone. And last, remote instruction is part of our safety plan and has a lot of moving parts. Occasional use ensures that our technology and procedures are in place, effective, and provide data for improvement.

With all that being said, remote instruction is not our first choice and we are aware that the HS experience is very different from the Daniel Warren experience, for example. I would not expect to be using it again this year unless absolutely necessary. As usual, we will use the experience to refine our plans so that we are prepared and effective.

### **Procurement Review**

In another example of using experience to refine processes, the Board of Education recently issued a message regarding closure of our technology procurement review. The Board shared the best practices offered by the legal team that conducted the review, along with noting several conclusions from the firm's work. As the superintendent, central to the issues that ultimately contributed to the genesis for the review, I'd like to offer three points to amplify the Board's message:

First, my office has embraced the best practice recommendations that were made. I will soon be offering reactions to the Board that underscore our responsiveness to the recommendations and acceptance of our responsibility to always seek improvement in how we exercise our fiduciary responsibilities.

Second, I want to note a particular lesson I learned from this process. The review identified early notification to the Board about even apparent conflicts of interest. Together, with our legal counsel, I will present to the board how we can put practices that make this a priority, something the Board also committed to in its letter to the community.

Finally, I appreciate the objective and deliberate manner that has led us to a place in which we can all agree on improvements that will make our district stronger.