

VALUE EDUCATION

RyeNeck Public Schools

September 2010

Superintendent's Notebook

By Peter J. Mustich, Ed. D.



I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our students, teachers, and staff to the 2010-11 school year – one that promises to be full of much excitement and success. While our buildings were closed to students during the past two months, district administrators, clerical staff, and custodians were busy preparing for the beginning of this year to ensure a seamless opening for our first day.

Many of our faculty returned to their classrooms in late summer to prepare their rooms and fine-tune lesson plans. In addition, all district staff began

the year with two days dedicated to professional development. They took part in a variety of workshops to ensure that they stay at the forefront of our ever-evolving educational field. I would like to thank our entire staff for their dedicated effort in making the transition to yet another school year a very smooth one.

The essence of our schools is a quality staff. To that end, we work diligently to recruit not only the best and brightest professionals, but people who will add the most value to our district. This year we had to hire fewer teachers as we continue to maximize the use of our existing staff and adjust to student enrollment. As always, the district utilized a rigorous hiring process to recruit new staff. This included extensive resume searches, multiple interviews, and, where possible, demonstration lessons. You will see those individuals profiled in *(continued on page 2)*

A Message from Heidi Sickles, Board President

I am pleased to welcome you to the start of the 2010-11 school year and I wish success for all students and staff. When thinking about what I wanted to share with the community in this **Value Ed** column, one of the first things that came to my mind was how our district communicates. As you may know, one of the Board of Education goals for this year is to engage in productive two-way communication with our community.

My experience on the Board has shown me that it is key for the community to understand the responsibilities of Board members and, therefore, what we can and cannot do. The primary responsibilities of a school board are to set policy

and priorities for the district and to evaluate the superintendent. The day-to-day operation of the district is delegated to the superintendent and the administrative team.



Individual student issues are not the purview of the Board. The staff closest to the actual issue can more effectively handle these situations. Generally, this is the teacher or the principal. If a parent is not satisfied with how an issue is handled at the building level, then the next step is to contact the superintendent's office with your concern.

I believe it is also important to note that Board members cannot make decisions or take action on their own - the Board can only legally operate as a *(continued on page 2)*

Notebook *(continued from page 1)*

this issue of *Value Education*. Please join me in welcoming them to the Rye Neck Community!

This year our district is committed to continuing our work in the school libraries. Mr. William McKeon, a teacher on special assignment, will now be the leader of the Bellows library. Mr. McKeon has been diligently working all summer to make changes and plan for the library's grand reopening. We will continue to develop our other libraries to become rich resources of information for our students, as well as social and production centers.

In addition to focusing on our libraries, our district's 21st century plans continue. We will emphasize maximizing opportunities for our students to identify and use their individual talents. This year we are also implementing our new math program, ***Math In Focus***. This Singapore approach offers our students a strong foundation and more of a challenge in their academics. This will ultimately better prepare our students for the work they will encounter as they move through the grades. Our district has acquired the online component of ***Math In Focus***, which will allow parents to access student materials online. We will be monitoring its use throughout the year to determine if more of our school materials should also be made available through the web.

Our district has invested in new technology for the 2010-11 year that will ultimately improve communication between the district and parents. The **District Information System** will now allow us to instantly call and email parents in the case of emergency situations or school closings. This technology provides us with the ability to call multiple phone numbers within minutes (home phone, cell phone, work phone, etc.). The **District Information System** combined with more traditional forms of communication such as local media outlets and announcements on the district website, will ensure that all parents receive important information in a timely manner. We will automatically upload contact information that parents provided when filling out emergency cards for their child's individual school – there is no need to “register” with the **District Information System**.

As we begin this transition, we will continue to communicate important information to parents. In addition, as part of our plan to improve connectivity, we will also begin sharing ways that the district anticipates using technology to keep parents and students informed about student progress throughout the year.

As our schools come alive once again with the start of the year, I encourage parental and community involvement. If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, please take a few minutes to fill out the required volunteer form. These forms will be cleared by me and kept confidential in the central office. Each principal will receive a list of approved names to use for their database of volunteers. To date, we have many people who have submitted the information and have been cleared. Please be reminded that this is a precaution we are taking for the safety and security of our students.

As always, please feel free to contact me throughout the school year with any comments, suggestions, or concerns. I look forward to seeing our students, teachers, staff, and community members as the 2010-11 school year gets underway.

A Message from the Board

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whole entity. Therefore, if you wish to “officially communicate” with the Board, it must be shared with all trustees. In addition, school boards can only take official action at public meetings, with a majority vote, and only at the recommendation of the superintendent.

There are many ways you can “follow the action” of school board decisions made throughout the year. Board meetings are open to the public and the yearly schedule is posted on the district calendar. Regular meetings are televised by both LMC-TV and RCTV, and are streamed to the district website. The district website is the primary source of Board information, including our annual goals, schedule of curriculum presentations, meeting agendas and Board minutes.

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A Message from the Board

(Continued from page 2)

As always, community members are welcome to share their thoughts with the Board. There is an opportunity for the public to address the Board at its regular meetings. In addition, the Board hosts office hours, during which two trustees are available for the hour prior to each Board planning session. You may also send a message to the Board email address at boardofed@ryeneck.k12.ny.us. The district clerk receives all emails sent to this address and distributes them to all Board members.

We look forward to hearing from you throughout the year and hope that you do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

New Math Program – K-5

Rye Neck has refocused its efforts to increase rigor and provide a thoughtful and balanced approach to problem solving regarding math instruction throughout the grades.

In an effort to realize this goal, the elementary faculty investigated and piloted several math programs during the 2009-10 school year. After careful consideration, the pilot group reached a consensus, and recommended *Math in Focus* for adoption by the Board of Education as Rye Neck's K-5 program.

Math in Focus brings to the classroom Singapore's research-based approach to teaching mathematics. The instructional advantages of the program are:

- Carefully sequenced and paced instruction of fewer topics at grade level, in greater depth
- A concrete to pictorial to abstract approach that supports conceptual understanding
- Close alignment with the NCTM focal points
- Instruction centered on problem solving with an algebraic focus

It also provides:

- Online resources for teachers, parents and students to support the home-school connection
- Resources for enrichment
- Practice materials
- In-service training for teachers

The *Math in Focus* program offers Rye Neck students the tools needed to build a strong foundation in the elementary school for success in higher level mathematics in high school and college.

Bellows Library Transformation

The F.E. Bellows Library is undergoing a transformation to align it with the district's 21st Century initiative. All research materials have been moved into the Technology Research Center, formerly the computer lab (which is adjacent to the library), or to the grade level classrooms for which the materials would be appropriate.



Some of the basic library activities will continue such as book exchange, author visits, public librarian visits, etc. The redesigned library program has five goals:

- To foster students as lifelong learners who enjoy working in a collaborative space that is designed to enhance the development of individual strengths and interests
- To develop students' abilities to become critical and creative thinkers
- To promote an appreciation of literature
- To teach information and media literacy skills
- To encourage content creation

Within these goals, students will be exposed to cutting edge technology and taught information and literacy skills that enhance self-directed learning.

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Welcome New Staff 2010-2011 School Year



Stephanie Adler – Second Grade Leave Position

Stephanie Adler joins the Rye Neck School District after spending the past two years teaching first and second graders in Byram Hills. She has also taught in the

Greenburgh Central 7 and Rye City School Districts. Working with children is Ms. Adler's passion and she particularly enjoys working with early elementary students.

Ms. Adler obtained her NY State Certification in Elementary Education in 2006, NY State Certification in Special Education in 2009, and was recently certified in Early Childhood Education. She graduated from Manhattanville College in 2006, where she received her Master's Degree in Elementary Education.

Stephanie is an avid reader and loves historical fiction. In her spare time, she enjoys swimming, working with animals, and spending time with her family. She is looking forward to a successful 2010-2011 school year.



Patrick Ardinger – Part-Time HS English Teacher

Mr. Ardinger comes to Rye Neck as a new English and creative writing teacher. He studied English at Stanford University and English Edu-

cation at Teachers College, Columbia University. He loves piano and voice and intends to help with the school musical. Mr. Ardinger also hopes to begin an a cappella group during his first year at Rye Neck. His other interests include Claymation and travel to visit family and friends.



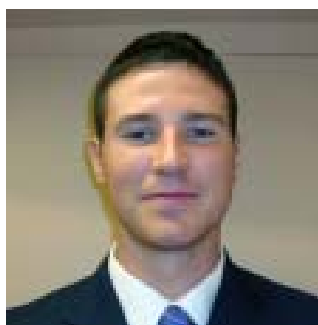
Claire Comerford – Part-Time HS Social Studies Teacher

Ms. Comerford is a native of New York City and graduated from Fordham University with a B.A. in History. While in college, she was a managing paralegal at

Ivagomen, DelDay, et. al., one of the nation's largest immigration law firms.

Realizing that law was not for her, Claire enrolled at the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University and received a Master's Degree in Adolescent Social Studies. Ms. Comerford taught at New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn and The HS of Economics and Finance in Manhattan where she was also Dean of Discipline. After her son was born, she moved to Northern Westchester and worked at Alexander Hamilton and Mamaroneck High Schools as a leave replacement.

Ms. Comerford's goal is to create a stimulating and respectful learning environment in which curiosity is cultivated. When not teaching, she loves to ski, hike, read, relax and attend academic lectures.



Matthew Wurtz, TA - Special Services

Matthew Wurtz comes to Rye Neck from Valhalla, New York. He graduated from Valhalla High School in 2004 and then attended Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts where

he earned a Bachelors Degree in Applied Exercise Science. Mr. Wurtz also recently completed his Master's Degree in Physical Education at Manhattanville College. In his free time, Mr. Wurtz enjoys reading, working out, and spending time with family and friends.

Introducing Patty Nashelsky – New PTSA President



We are pleased to introduce our new PTSA President, Mrs. Patty Nashelsky. Patty has been a resident of the district for eight years and has been a PTSA volunteer for several years. For the last two years, she served as Vice President for Daniel Warren. When she is not busy volunteering her time in the schools, Patty manages a household consisting of four boys, two dogs, and her husband, Darren.

We wish her the best of luck with the new challenge and are confident that she will be successful. Thank you in advance for taking on this vital role!

PTSA News

By: Patty Nashelsky

Congratulations to the 2010-2011 PTSA Executive Committee members:

President - Patty Nashelsky
Vice-President, High School - Sally Morningstar
Vice-President, Middle School - Karla Aber
Vice-President, F. E. Bellows - Jenn Rubin
Vice-President, Daniel, Warren - Mary Ellen Dorfman
Vice-President, SEAC - Barbara McCaffery
Vice-President-Special Projects - Gina Calcagni
Vice-President, Fundraising - Debbi Aulfinger
Treasurer - Laura Van Buren
Recording Secretary - Allison Reynolds
Corresponding Secretary - Theresa Spencer
Advisor - Julie O'Shea

We would like to extend a special thank you to the outgoing PTSA President, Julie O'Shea, and Executive Committee members Emily Cohen,

Mary Bermingham, Arjan Eenkema van Dijk, and Jody Maki, all of whom have so generously shared their time, wisdom and energy for our children over the course of the last several years.

The Rye Neck PTSA welcomes you to a new school year! We hope that you and your family have had a restful summer and are ready for an exciting year. We encourage you to join the PTSA and hope you will consider volunteering to work on one of our many committees for the great events and programs the PTSA has planned this year.

The PTSA funds in whole or in part the following programs:

- The Heard in Rye speaker series for parents
- Author Visits program at the Elementary and Middle Schools
- Rye YMCA Lunchtime Recess programs at Daniel Warren and F.E. Bellows
- Pizza lunch days at the elementary schools
- Rachel's Challenge for the Middle School
- Circus Arts Program for fourth graders
- Steps for Success Program for sixth graders
- Health and Wellness Springtime Program at Daniel Warren
- Environmental and Recycling Earth Week Celebrations at the elementary schools
- Numerous Cultural Arts programs at all four schools, including the "2 Hands 2 Learn" enrichment programs at the elementary schools, an improv theater production at the Middle School, a back to school outdoor movie night at the Middle School, and various dance programs at the High School
- Bike Rodeo
- Fifth grade affairs which runs the annual BBQ and student/teacher kickball game and creates an F.E. Bellows yearbook
- Panther Press room which produces the personalized books written and illustrated by our elementary school children.

In addition, the PTSA funds various committees that support the families in our district. These

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13 Teachers to be Recommended for Tenure

The Rye Neck School District is committed to recruiting and retaining excellent teachers. There are several mechanisms in place to ensure that our professional staff meets this goal, including ongoing feedback from building principals, department supervisors, directors, and chairs.

Each of these professionals brings a unique and important perspective to the process, and works individually with nontenured teachers to foster professional development and provide support. These professional relationships help staff members reflect on their practice, grow, and make appropriate adjustments.

From a formal perspective, district administrators employ a comprehensive evaluation process, frequently observing and evaluating each new staff member to offer suggestions, monitor progress, and assess improvement. There is a three-year probationary period required before new teachers receive tenure, and a two-year period for those teachers who have previously held tenure in another district in New York State.

Parents can provide valuable insights and should do so, first to the staff member directly, since this feedback would be most helpful to him/her. Once parents have spoken to the teacher, they may also wish to share their thoughts with the individual building principal or supervisor.

Tenure recommendations are currently being considered for the following staff members:

Leah Englander - Elementary, Middle School
Eric Ghiozzi - Special Ed, Middle School
Brent Kammerer - TA, High School
Kelly Krentsa - TA, High School
Jason Kunka - Social Studies, High School
Linda Mazzeo - Special Ed, High School
Rosina Osso - Foreign Language, Middle School
Kristine Pegno - TA, High School
Lori Penesis - Science, High School
Christine Prieston, Special Ed, Bellows
Melissa Wagner, Elementary, Daniel Warren

Tis the Season for Fall Sports



During the summer months when classrooms were closed and many students were on vacation, our student-athletes and coaches remained hard at work. They participated and competed in various team camps, summer

leagues, sport specific evening workout sessions, and the Empire State Games. The fall season promises to be an exciting one!

As you attend our various athletic events, you will notice the results of several summer facility upgrade projects. These include a renovated parking lot; fresh paint in our dugouts, press box and Athletic Center; a new football goalpost and uprights; and a concession stand sign that declares "Home of the Rye Neck Panthers."

We are eager to get the fall season underway and look forward to your continued support of our athletic programs, athletes and coaches!

Friday, October 8th:

- Field Hockey - 4:30pm
- Girls Tennis - 4:30pm
- Girls Soccer - 4:00pm
- Volleyball - 6:00pm

Saturday October 9th:

- Football - 3:00pm
- Boys Soccer - 4:30pm



Additionally, the district would like to once again recognize and congratulate our 2010 Spring All-State selections:

Jessica Calvini - All-State Softball
Ryan Pennell - All-State Baseball

Bellows Library (continued from page 3)

Teachers and students will develop and share essential questions, use Internet resources and databases that make learning relevant to the complexity of the world beyond the classroom walls.

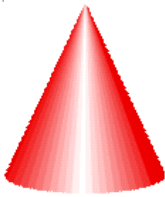
Plans are underway to expand the hours that the library is available to students before school and during recess. An electronic bulletin board is being installed outside the library and will announce all special events that will take place in the library.

Daniel Warren Welcomes “ELMO”

Daniel Warren teachers and students are moving further into the 21st Century as they pilot three “ELMO” document



cameras. This amazing tool, which interfaces with our classroom Smartboard technology, helps foster more dynamic and interactive classroom discussions and observations by providing opportunities to view objects in 3D!



Students will soon discover that an object can appear very different depending on its orientation. Classroom applications are limitless - imagine students observing and comparing beetles and butterflies or examining the root systems and leaves of pollinator plants from the DW Cornell Peace Garden. In math, the ELMO will add a new 3D twist to the complicated world of pyramids, cones and cylinders.

The talented and creative Daniel Warren staff is certain to find limitless opportunities and use for their new friend, “ELMO.”



PTSA News (continued from page 5)

include the PTSA newsletter, *Panther Pride*, Rye Neck Cares which aids families in need, and the Cultural Liaison Committee which integrates our Spanish and Japanese communities. The PTSA also arranges class pictures, assigns class parents, and school supplies. We also provide great teacher appreciation luncheons in May.

Volunteers Wanted for Focus Groups

Effective communication between the district and the Rye Neck community contributes to strong and successful schools, and community input is particularly important in these challenging economic times. From time to time throughout the school year, focus groups and small group conversations are held regarding the district budget and various curriculum issues.

If you are interested in participating in these types of sessions, please contact Veronica Sessler at 777-5252. Although we cannot always include all who are interested, we will use the list to help build groups that represent a good cross-section of the community’s interests.

“Getting to Know You” at Rye Neck Middle School



This coming June the last class of Rye Neck Middle School fifth graders will move on to our high school. Now entering their eighth-grade year, these students are the final group to spend four years in the building, from September 2007 to

June 2011. Several people have addressed concern that staff will not get to know the middle school students as well now that students will spend 25% less time at the school. Rest assured, the school has implemented several initiatives to ensure that all staff make valuable connections with our student body.

Although they only spend a limited time within our school buildings, Rye Neck Middle School students have ample opportunity to be enriched by a diverse faculty. All of our club moderators and most of our coaching staff are also Rye Neck staff members which provides students with greater opportunities to connect with their teachers. Our staff brings an array of personalities and talents to our school and their devotion to the students extends beyond the boundaries of a 42-minute class.

Last year, for example, the middle school held its first Olympics featuring athletic, artistic, and spirit competitions. Although the idea was generated to coincide with the winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, our event was so successful that we have decided to make it an annual tradition and expand upon the concept from last year.

This year, we will compose five teams named after each of the colors in the Olympic rings. Like last year, each team will be made up of students and staff from all three grades. However, instead of a single day devoted to the Olympics, we will now have four quarterly events. This will allow us to

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Rye Neck Union Free School District has complied with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act, AHERA (40 CFR 763.85) by completing the following requirements:

1. Reinspecting all buildings and spaces for all asbestos contaminating building materials.
2. Sampling previously untested building materials suspected of containing asbestos.
3. Updating the management plan.

The reinspection results and updated management plans are available for review in the Administration Office or your respective school office.

host a broad variety of competitions to tap into the diverse talent pool of all students

Another way students can learn about our staff is through the school’s new “Who’s Who in the Middle School” wall. Here they can learn unique things about their teachers (and discover, perhaps, that they are not all that scary!) Or, students may connect with a staff member through the Guidance Department’s Advisory Program. Now in its third year, the Advisory program has now expanded to encompass the eighth grade as well. Students might also participate in the band, chorus, or theater production, not to mention the dozen clubs and 14 modified sports teams that our school offers. Students may also see teachers in the halls, at breakfast, at lunch, or after school.

In addition to the 42 minutes that students are in each class, students have many opportunities to make valuable connections. There are many avenues they can take to get involved – each individual student has his/her own place at the Middle School. Explore the relationships and participate!

Introducing 21st Century Adult Learning

What is adult learning theory?

In the past, people thought of learning and development as something that took place primarily in childhood. Today, however, research shows that our ability to make meaning of things continues to deepen as we move throughout life. Therefore, learning is not a matter of just knowing more things – but of knowing things in a more complex way. Adults, however, experience growth differently and at differing rates – thus, any organization is likely to consist of individuals who make meaning in diverse ways.



Why does adult learning matter to Rye Neck?

These days, schools and the people in them are being asked to meet new challenges and solve more complex problems than ever before. To address these challenges, schools need adults who are constantly learning and continuously growing.

Understanding adult learning is key to building this capacity. As part of the district's 21st century skills initiative, this year Rye Neck school leaders will be exploring and applying these concepts through a series of workshops that began on August 31st.

By promoting the growth and development of adults in our schools, we'll be even better prepared to support the growth of our students.

Interested in Board Service?

Every year the community elects two members to the Rye Neck School Board. Trustees serve a three-year term and are volunteers. The primary responsibilities of a school board are to set policy and priorities for the district and to evaluate the superintendent. The board puts into place the stepping stones to ensure all students achieve at the highest levels, while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of this community. If you are interested in learning more about board service, please contact Veronica Sessler, the district clerk, at 777-5252.



Welcome Class of 2024! Kindergarten Students at Daniel Warren begin their exciting school careers.

Rye Neck Union Free School District
Administration Building
310 Hornidge Road
Mamaroneck, New York 10543

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 4374
White Plains, NY 10601

Board of Education
Heidi Sickles, President
Cathy O'Keefe, Vice President
Nancy Tucci
Guy Pipolo
Al Hodys
Bonni Gottlieb

Dear Rye Neck Resident

Administration 777-5200
Peter J. Mustich, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools
Kimberly Bucci, Ed. D.
Assistant Superintendent for Business