



Superintendent's Bulletin

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Dear RCSD Community,

Each year, in October, the members of the RCSD Board of Education read a book and then hold a book talk during a Board Meeting. Each trustee picks a passage from the book that particularly resonates with them, and the others respond. You can watch the discussion [here](#); it starts at 8:30. Several Board members tell me that this year's book selection was their favorite yet: a book called *Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic-And What We Can Do About It*, by Jennifer Breheny Wallace.



The book, which came out in 2023, was an instant New York Times bestseller. It talks about how today's teens, facing unprecedented pressure to succeed, end up packing their schedules with AP classes, sports, and resume-padding activities, sometimes sacrificing friendships in their drive to get ahead. Families are stretched financially and time-wise with tutors, private coaches, activities, and athletic schedules.

Wallace knows of which she speaks. She raised her children in suburban Connecticut, in a community not unlike the one here in Rye. She is also an award-winning reporter, and she used those skills to delve deeply into the rise of what she terms "toxic achievement culture." She interviewed families and educators and fielded an original survey on achievement pressure answered by almost 6,000 parents. She interviewed leading child psychologists, who noted that the drive to optimize performance has resulted in skyrocketing rates of anxiety, depression, and even self-harm in America's high achieving schools - both public and private.

Wallace finds the pressure to perform is not a matter of parental choice, but is now a part of our broader society and is spurred by a perceived climate of increasing income inequality and dwindling opportunities. As a result, she believes children are increasingly hearing the message that their worth is contingent upon their performance - their GPA, their college acceptances, their athletics accomplishments, their social media followers - and that this message is reinforced by the media and the community at large.

It's an impactful read and is chock-full of memorable stories and anecdotes. It also has a tool kit of suggestions for parents and educators who want to make a positive change.

For example, Wallace finds that what kids really want from adults is not more pressure, but to feel like they matter, regardless of their achievements. She notes that, ironically, kids who receive consistent feedback that they matter no matter what are more likely to have the resilience, self-confidence, and psychological security to thrive. As Wallace says, "The takeaway is clear: living with toxic stress is harming a large portion of our youth, and as the adults in the room, it is our job to do something about it." An important question we should be asking in our homes, our schools and in our community: how can we teach our kids to strive towards excellence without crushing them?

Sincerely,

Eric Byrne, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Colonel Mustard in the Library with the Candlestick...Or Was It?

On Friday, October 18, and Saturday, October 19, the Rye High School Parsons Street Players put on two evenings and one matinee performance of "Clue: On Stage" to enraptured audiences. The cast of 15 performers was backed by a crew of 23 students. A big congratulations to the cast, crew, director John O'Donnell, and set designer Jeff Loddo for three mystery-laden performances!



Photos Courtesy of Grey Cat Productions

Commendations

A number of fall teams are currently in the playoffs:

- Girls varsity cross country
- Girls varsity field hockey
- Boys varsity football
- Boys varsity soccer
- Girls varsity soccer (undefeated league champions)
- Girls varsity swimming and diving team (sectionals and states)
- Girls varsity volleyball

Varsity soccer striker Kaden Zion is the Lions Club athlete of the month for September

Mello Scholarship Award Winners



L to R: Drew Haines (Harrison HS),
Doug Mello, Jake Kessner (Rye HS)

Each year, before the annual Rye-Harrison Game, two seniors from Rye High School and Harrison High School receive the Christopher Mello Award. The memorial scholarship award was established by the family of Chris Mello, the Rye High School Class of 1994 football captain who died on 9/11. Since 2002, the foundation has given out \$230,000 in scholarships to Rye and Harrison football players. The two winners met on the 50 yard line of Nugent Stadium field to receive their awards from Doug Mello, Chris's father. This year's winners are **Jake Kessner** from Rye and **Drew Haines** from Harrison, both of whom were chosen for best embodying the spirit and character that Mello exhibited in life.



RHS's 6 National Merit Scholarship Program Commended Students

Six Rye High School seniors were named Commended Students in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program in late September. The students earned the commendation by scoring well on the PSAT during their junior year. Commended students placed among the top 2.6 percent of the more than 1.3 million students who entered the National Merit Competition. The students were recognized for their achievement with a Rye Recognition of Excellence Award at the October 22 Board of Education meeting. The students are:

Olivia Cabrera, Brendan Chapman, Peter Olkhovets, Zachary (Zac) Ramsey, Neila Shaka, and Henry Tighe

Congratulations to the students, their families, and their teachers!



L to R: Superintendent Eric Byrne, Brendan Chapman, Olivia Cabrera, Neila Shaka,
Peter Olkhovets, Zac Ramsey, and Henry Tighe

RHS Community Service Fair



Rye High School held a service fair on October 29. Representatives from 17 community-based organizations set up booths for students to visit during community lunch. The students had a chance to learn about the missions of the various groups and sign up to volunteer.

Pumpkin Patch Fun!



Looking Ahead

Friday, November 1

Diwali

No School for Students

RCSD Offices open 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 5

Election Day - Superintendent's Conference Day

No School for Students

Wednesday, November 6

RFE Kick Off Event

Rye Bar and Grill

6:30-9:30 p.m.

Friday, November 8, and Saturday, November 9

RMS Presents "Disney's The Little Mermaid, JR"

Performing Arts Center

7:00 p.m.

Monday, November 11

Veterans Day Observed

Schools and Offices Closed

Tuesday, November 12

Board of Education Meeting

7:30 p.m.

RMS Multipurpose Room

Thursday, November 14

Early Dismissal - Elementary Schools Only

11:00 a.m.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Tuesday, November 19

Board of Education Meeting/Open Topics Forum

7:30 p.m.

RMS Multipurpose Room

Wednesday, November 27

Early Dismissal for Thanksgiving Recess - All Schools

HS/MS - 11:00 a.m. - NO LUNCH

Elementary - 11:30 a.m. - NO LUNCH

Thursday, November 28-Friday, November 29

Thanksgiving Recess

Schools and Offices Closed

