

Welcome to Frederick E. Bellows Elementary School. Every year we include daytime Board of Education meetings at both elementary schools to complement our usual evening times. Our final budget hearing on May 7 is therefore at Daniel Warren. As we talk about our Strategic Plan, it bears remembering that one of the characteristics of Rye Neck that rose to the top of the list when we surveyed our stakeholders was the feeling that we have a close-knit community. One way our small district size works to our advantage is that all district students at each grade level go to the same school. In education, that is called the "Princeton Plan", a term that arose from desegregation efforts during the Civil Rights Era, when some districts began to change the relationship between neighborhood schools and the district as a whole. We're lucky in that our district schools *are* our neighborhood schools. We find value in hosting our Board meetings around Rye Neck to showcase each location to reinforce its place in our students' learning journey.

Despite our compact size we have yet again seen our Rye Neck varsity teams reach the postseason--this fall season, ALL of them. We have pride in all of our competitors, but we wish our boys soccer team luck as they represent our district this weekend. Should they win the semifinal on Saturday, they play for the state championship on Sunday! Let's go Panthers!

Last month I mentioned how our Strategic Planning team determined three goals: to promote problem solving, to create connection with purpose, and to transform professional learning. Action Teams of administrators, teachers, and support staff broke down each goal into steps that will result in the outcomes we want. Our milestone indicators to track progress can be found on our website. We began our three meeting series of Strategic Planning presentations in October with the leadership of our Goal 3 group to outline how our Professional Learning will set the table for everything else. This morning, members of our Goal 2 Action Team, PPS Director Wil Siegel, Grade 2 teacher Brian Pinto, and 6th grade counselor Meegan Lawlor will speak from our collective heart and share how we are building the kind of empathetic environments that will enable our students to concentrate on learning.

But first we address a bittersweet event that usually happens at the end of every school year-- the recognition of retiring employees. Sometimes, an employee is able to retire during the school year and today we honor three of those! Before I invite several of our administrators up to say a few words about each, I want to extend a big, public "thank you" to Madelein Biegen, Julie Ianello, and Val Oddo. I think public service, particularly in the form of service to students, is incredibly important. Each of you has had a role in our students growing up in a special place like Rye Neck. In return, we congratulate you on your well-earned retirement.