

**RYE NECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
300 HORNIDGE ROAD
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543
BOARD OF EDUCATION PLANNING SESSION
DECEMBER 4, 2024**

Present: President Jason Carmel

DRAFT

Trustee Nikki Barker

Trustee Halli Gatenio

Trustee Gloria Golle

Trustee Erica Wagner

Trustee Elizabeth Yong (joined meeting at 6:33 p.m.)

Dr. Eric Lutinski, Superintendent of Schools

Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business

Corrine Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Mary Lanza, Director of Technology and Communications

Mary Ellen Chiera, District Clerk

I. Opening of Meeting

President Carmel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Barker and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the Minutes of the November 13, 2024 Board of Education Meeting.

AYES: All Present

NAYES: None

III. Discussion

Stranger Danger Update

Dr. Lutinski updated the Board with regard to the notice that was sent to the community earlier today. He stated that he received an update from the police this afternoon. They had a presence around the Florence Park community after school and will be there again tomorrow morning. The investigation is ongoing, and the police will update Dr. Lutinski again tomorrow.

Cell Phone Policy Update

Dr. Lutinski began by advising the Board that it is the District's position that a

restricted-use policy strikes the best balance between the benefits and challenges of cell phone use in schools and recommends a policy that limits distractions while leveraging the benefits of technology. He spoke to Altaris with regard to student cell phone use in school as it relates to emergency situations. They advised that there are benefits and risks to the use of cell phones during an emergency. This is also a topic of discussion among the different superintendent groups throughout the area.

Next, he reviewed results of the teacher survey with regard to cell phone rules in the Middle and High School. In the Middle School, cell phones are not to be used in the school building during school hours unless authorized by a teacher for a special classroom purpose. Of those teachers who took the survey, all agreed that the rules are appropriate for the age group. Most teachers have had no issues with phone use, but some have to remind students of the rule. Many students carry cell phones during the day and use them in the hallways or bathrooms despite the rules.

With regard to the High School, the current rules for student cell phones use the “traffic light” system, where teachers can restrict cell phone use in the classroom and they may be allowed elsewhere in the building. Of those teachers who took the survey, 45% agree that the rules are effective but 55% do not agree; and 65% agree that the rules are age appropriate while 35% disagree. Those who disagreed felt that there was inconsistency across classrooms since current policies vary by teacher.

Discussion was had with regard to student challenges, proposed solutions, enforcement, concerns and limitations, and the use of cell phones for educational purposes. Dr. Lutinski stated that overall, cell phones are viewed as a useful backup tool when Chromebooks are unavailable or insufficient, but policies are needed to ensure appropriate use.

Communications Survey Data

Mrs. Lanza reviewed with the Board the results of the Communications Parent Survey. She stated that she sent out two district-wide email blasts and had 251 respondents. With regard to district-level communications, parents were asked the following questions: what they felt was the most important feature in a communications tool, how satisfied they are with district-level communications, and how well informed they felt about key areas and why. Some of the general issues were information overload and lack of centralization; inconsistent communication; communication preferences; and the need to improve accessibility across all platforms.

With regard to school-level communications, parents were asked how satisfied they are with school communications, how often they read the principal’s newsletter, and what section of the newsletter they find useful. Some of the general issues were length and formatting issues; issues searching for and accessing information; over-communication vs. gaps; and more teacher communication.

Parent Square Timeline

Mrs. Lanza reviewed for the Board the features of the District’s new communication tool, Parent Square. It’s a central location where parents can get their information and get in touch with key personnel; it automatically translates in over 100 languages; families will be up to date and engage with the content by completing forms, offering to volunteer,

viewing class updates and messaging school staff (except principals); and users will be able to choose their notification preference (text, email, app, direct message). She stated that clerical and administrations have begun training, and parents will be invited to join in January. A teacher pilot group will launch in March, and best practices will be developed by the end of the school year. She expects that Rye Neck will be fully onboard by September 2026.

Discussion followed with regard to the continued use of the costs, procurement process, and the continued use of the parent portal.

Technology Consultant Search - RFP

Dr. Lutinski stated that the District is at the end of its 5 year cycle with regard to the contract with our technology consultant. He then reviewed the timeline for the RFP process. The RFP will be released on January 21st and will close on February 7th. The proposals will be evaluated and interviews will be conducted in February and the Board will approve a contract at the March 19th Board meeting.

School Attorney and Internal Auditor RFPs

Dr. Lutinski stated that the process and timeline are the same as the technology consultant search.

Policy Committee Update

Trustee Barker stated that the committee met on November 26th. They reviewed the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy. Dr. Lutinski and Mr. Siegel provided an update on the mental health screener as it relates to Policy 5550. The following policies were discussed and will be put up for a first reading at the December 18th Board Meeting:

Policy 8130 -School Safety Plans and Teams - was updated to reflect state regulations.

Policy 1120 - School District Records - is a required policy with a required update on notifying current and former employees of a FOIL request on their disciplinary record. Dr. Lutinski obtained the added language from our attorney.

Policy 5695- Students and Personal Electronic Devices - was reissued to give districts the opportunity to update their policy to reflect actual practices.

Section 4000 will be reviewed at next policy committee meeting

High School Principal Search

Dr. Lutinski stated that they will be posting for the High School principal position in early February and will have the Board look at the posting at the January Planning Session.

IV. Executive Session

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Gatenio and seconded by Trustee Barker, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby agrees to move into executive session to discuss contract negotiation updates, a student matter made confidential under FERPA, and Superintendent evaluation feedback.

AYES: All Present
NAYES: None

V. Adjournment of Executive Session, Reopening of Public Meeting and Adjournment of Public Meeting

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Golle and seconded by Trustee Barker, it was

RESOLVED, that the executive session be adjourned and the Public Meeting be reopened; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, that there being no further business before the Board and upon motion duly made by Trustee Gatenio and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education Planning Session of December 4, 2024 be adjourned.

AYES: All Present
NAYES: None

President Carmel adjourned the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Chiera
District Clerk