

# VALUE Education

Rye Neck Schools

Winter 2025

## Superintendent's Notebook

Eric Lutinski, Ed.D.

Dear Rye Neck families,

The exciting second semester of our school year has begun. Looking back at my high school years, I recall the expectation of "senioritis": the joyful second half of 12th grade when you could coast, rest on your laurels, and have fun with friends. Yet, gone are the days where school was so simplistic. We now have higher expectations and a recognition that our students are capable of so much more. Among the indications of their capacity as they conclude their K-12 journey are their many activities beyond the boundaries of a desk in row, in a cloistered classroom (and they still get to have fun with their friends).

First, Rye Neck High School's Capstone Project is the culmination of their high school social studies requirement. Seniors in the Participation in Government course created civic action plans on issues they feel strongly about. A key component of their work is engaging with professionals in the community who can provide insight and/or guidance as they gather data and construct their plan. Many of us at Rye Neck have had the pleasure of hosting students who interviewed us on various aspects of their proposals. Since Participation in Government is a one-semester course, our first semester students have completed their projects and given their presentations to a panel of staff members while the second semester group has recently begun their work.

These civics projects encourage our students to demonstrate their readiness to make a positive difference in our communities and I have been impressed on several levels, including their level of inquiry, their depth of research, and their presentation skills. These projects, overseen by senior teacher Nora Hanson and the Social Studies Department, are excellent examples of our Strategic Plan goals in action, particularly the dynamic problem solving from Goal 1, the sense of purpose outside the classroom of Goal 2, and certainly the teacher's role in developing student expertise and transformative experiences from Goal 3.

Second, our Senior Internship Project is a long-standing

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## An Update from the Board of Education

by Trustee Jason Carmel

The Board has been hard at work finding our next Superintendent. Dr. Lutinski announced his resignation in December and will retire at the end of the school year in June. As soon as he informed the Board of his intentions, we began to seek a search firm. We used our network of advisors to find firms, and 3 firms rose to the top. Each of them have extensive experience finding Superintendents in Westchester. We did a screening interview with each of the firms and determined that they would be a good fit for our district. Then we solicited formal proposals and reviewed these. We interviewed each of the firms using a common set of questions. School Leadership was a unanimous choice among the Board members. We then performed 4 reference checks from similar school districts in Westchester that had used School Leadership; these were all positive. The price of the firm was in the middle of the others, and only School Leadership offered to defray some of the costs through a cooperative agreement with BOCES.

At our January 8th planning meeting, we unanimously passed a resolution to hire School Leadership and to spend up to \$35,000 on the Superintendent search. Two individuals at School Leadership will lead the search: Susan Wollin is a former president of the Bedford school district, former president of Westchester Putnam School Boards Association, and a professional executive search consultant for corporations; and Dr. Kenneth Mitchell is a former superintendent of South Orangetown school district in Rockland, NY and current Associate Professor at Manhattanville College for the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership. You can find information about the search, including a timeline, on a dedicated Superintendent Search page on the district website. We will also be giving regular updates on the web page, at our meetings, and through other written communications.

Through School Leadership, we solicited community

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## Superintendent's Notebook

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gem in the 4th marking period and one of the most valuable experiences for Rye Neck students. 12th grade students have the opportunity to seek placements that fit their interests and may ultimately help steer their path after high school. Overseen by English Department Chairperson Kara Slattery, students complete internships, mostly off campus, and receive academic credit for their experiences. They are required to complete a series of assignments, create a short video project, and submit weekly attendance sheets for their 4th quarter and final exam grades in English and Social Studies. This provides another valuable connection between our students and their extended community and our students are often asked to stay on for either a continuation of their internship or for summer work by their hosts.

Third, Rye Neck requires our students to perform 40 hours of Community Service over their four years of high school. The requirement was put in place in 1990 and was actually defended by Rye Neck at the U. S. Supreme Court level in 1995. At its inception, the program was described to "allow students to develop a wide range of personal, intellectual, academic and social skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, negotiation, communication, planning, and evaluation that will help them become effective employees, colleagues, citizens, and leaders." These foundational skills dovetail with the values expressed by our community Strategic Planning Committee in 2023. Every year there is an unofficial competition for the seniors to hit 100+ hours to qualify them for the Rye Neck Community Service Award, and one recent graduate set his own goal to get over 1,000 hours-- he volunteered at Mamaroneck EMS and made it! According to our Counseling Department Office's Senior Assistant, Leslie Kane, the Class of 2025 already has the highest number of community service hours since we began keeping records: over 24,000 and we still have five months until graduation.

Finally, budget season is upon us! Our second presentation of the 2025-26 Rye Neck Schools budget plan will be made at the March 19th Board of Education meeting. Please join us either in the Rye Neck Middle/High School Community Room or view the live-streamed meeting from home at 7:00 PM.



High School students play in Burst of Talent

## Board Update

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feedback on what qualities you want in our next Superintendent. On January 27 and 28, 114 community members came together to participate in focus groups, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, the PTSA, Booster Club, and Rye Neck School Foundation. In addition, 285 community members completed our survey. We appreciate all of you taking the time and for giving us your feedback; the rate of participation is higher than most districts that School Leadership has worked with.

On February 5th, School Leadership presented the results of the focus groups and the survey. The results can be viewed on the Superintendent search page. Using these results, we created the profile of our next Superintendent, which is the description being used to advertise for the position.

The successful candidate will be:

- A confident, innovative, and visionary leader who purposely and persuasively engages the school community to focus on what's best for students while honoring valued Rye Neck traditions, ensuring the commitment to financial stability, and welcoming stakeholder input for guiding the district safely forward;
- A calm, measured, and thoughtful problem-solver who will help unify, refine, and strengthen board governance to ensure best practices are consistently modeled while proactively seeking creative solutions to better the district;
- A courageous, approachable, and ethical decision-maker with a sense of humor who leads by example and continuously builds trust through polished, ongoing, and transparent communications and regularly seeks to expand community engagement through constructive relationships;
- A personable, kind, and progressive educator with success in a high-expectation school district excited to support and enhance the excellence of Rye Neck's faculty, staff, and administrators by collectively identifying and implementing solutions;
- A dynamic, accessible, and collaborative instructional leader skilled at hiring and mentoring talent, supporting and inspiring stakeholders, and advancing the strategic plan while actively advocating for the district.

As the search progresses, we will continue to inform our community. We intend to announce a new superintendent in the Spring.



The Rye Neck Schools Board of Education



# PTSA Updates

From Ruth Homberg,  
PTSA President

Dear Rye Neck,

The PTSA had a very busy fall, and we are well on our way to meeting our goal of raising the \$108,000 we've committed to spend equally across all four schools. Some fall highlights include mental health assemblies and author visits.

Here are the authors who visited each school:

- DW: Aimee Sicuro
- FEB: Marc Tyler Nobleman
- MS: Victoria Jamieson
- HS: Colum McCann

We've also funded STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Math) events for all grades: from African Drum Circles to DNA Extraction and a Giant Inflatable balloon of the Earth; we hope we are providing experiences that students will remember, and that will spark conversations at home. Coming up, we'll have a bus from the Museum of Tolerance on the MS/HS Campus!

The PTSA also strives to build community. We ended 2024 with a free Family Dance Party for the elementary schools, and are hoping this year will bring even more fun.

I hope you'll join us for these upcoming events:

- 3/28: Parent's Night Out: A 90s Rewind Dance Party at Mamaroneck Beach & Yacht Club
- 4/5: Second-Hand Sale at FEB
- 4/26: Panther Party (we're bringing back the cakes...IYKYK)
- 5/4: Color Run in Florence Park

Watch your email for details. In the meantime, you can see our calendar, and find out more about how you can help us reach our fundraising goal by visiting our website: [ryneckpta.org](http://ryneckpta.org) or by following us on social media @ [ryneckpta](https://www.instagram.com/ryneckpta). Every contribution helps, and we truly appreciate your support

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2025.



4th Grade students at their Beyond Broadway Performance

# Alumni Association News

The Rye Neck High School Class of 1994 celebrated its 30-year reunion this past year, marking a significant milestone for alumni. The event brought together classmates from near and far, rekindling old friendships and creating new memories. Held at a beautiful local venue, the evening was filled with laughter, storytelling, and heartfelt conversations as everyone reflected on their shared experiences and personal journeys over the past three decades.

Many alumni expressed joy in reconnecting with former classmates and teachers, sharing updates on their careers, families, and life accomplishments.

The success of the reunion was made possible through the dedication and hard work of the Rye Neck Alumni Association. Their efforts ensured a warm and inviting atmosphere where everyone felt welcome and included. In addition to celebrating, the class proudly raised enough funds to establish a scholarship for an upcoming senior graduate, supporting the next generation of Rye Neck students in their academic journey.

As the night concluded, many expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to reconnect and looked forward to future gatherings. The 30-year reunion was a heartfelt celebration of lifelong bonds and the enduring spirit of the Rye Neck Class of 1994.

Looking ahead, we're excited to announce a fundraising softball game this spring! More details will be shared soon, so stay tuned.

Thank you for your continued support, and we wish you a joyful and successful school year.



Class of '94 reunion



Middle School students at the PTSA hangout



# Updates from the Booster Club

Jen Abbey, Booster Club President



Greetings!

The Rye Neck Booster Club has been tremendously busy since the start of the school year! We have enjoyed every minute of supporting our athletic & theater programs, as well as spreading Panther Spirit throughout the district!!!

Here are some of the main initiatives we have been involved in thus far:

- **Membership:** We had a very successful drive in the Fall, with 120 new individuals or families joining our membership! We always welcome new members. If you've been enjoying our programming or just want to support our mission of boosting athletics, theater and community spirit, please join today! Membership link is available at our website [www.ryeneckboosterclub.com](http://www.ryeneckboosterclub.com) or links provided on our weekly Wednesday newsletters!
- **Spiritwear:** We are thrilled to see all of the Rye Neck Panther merchandise being proudly worn about town! Our team has been hard at work this fall bringing you a new fresh logo, piloting selling RN Soccer & Basketball merch, gifting homecoming t-shirts to the entire HS community and more! We've attended pop up shops, PTSA dance parties, homecoming, the Rye Neck Booster Club Basketball Invitational and more in an effort to boost the panther spirit through merchandise sales!
- **Homecoming:** Despite the rainy weather, Panther spirits couldn't be dampened! The Panther was out celebrating with the crowd, the varsity teams had some thrilling wins, the fields were lined with senior signs and everyone enjoyed the concessions! The junior class helped run the concession stand and thus raised funds to contribute to their prom. Students from DW & FEB were in abundance at homecoming, all thrilled by the coordination of spirit week where classes created posters that adorned the fences on the way to the fields, a Panther visit to their schools, and a "bring me to homecoming" raffle ticket!
- **Fall Fest Fundraiser:** Thank you, Rye Neck! We had a brilliant turnout for our annual Fall Fest held at Rye Grill & Bar in October. Many members of the community contributed products and services to our auction. Opportunities for elementary school students to be a "manager of the day" for the varsity sports teams, or to get a walk on role in the upcoming Grease musical were amongst the highlights of the auction! The highlight of the evening was seeing our HS students shine: we had speeches by two Varsity athletes about how Rye Neck Athletics has impacted their HS Career, and a beautiful performance by the chorus, glee club & musical theater class lead by Ms. Feinman! Thank you to all who donated, participated in the online auction, or who attended...we felt the Panther love!

- **Harlem Wizards:** On January 31st, we had over 700 students and parents pack the gym to watch the awesome team of Rye Neck staff battle it out with the Harlem Wizards. It was a fun, happy event that was perfectly timed to beat the winter doldrums away! The Booster Club loved seeing the student community singing, dancing and laughing together...all the way from pre-K all the way to HS volunteers! That is what it means to be a Panther!

Save the date for our next big event, a Thursday night March Madness 2025 event at Wellingtons on March 20th! Tickets will be on sale soon!

Please join us at a meeting, we love to see new faces & hear new ideas! Also feel free to email: [RNBoosterclub@ryeneck.org](mailto:RNBoosterclub@ryeneck.org) with any questions!

The Booster Club officers and our extended leadership team are looking forward to seeing you at a game or theatre event sometime soon!

President – Jen Abbey  
 Vice President - Rachel Felenstein  
 Secretary - Tanya Preisser  
 Treasurer - Laura Evangelista



Section 1 All-Sportmanship Team Fall Athletes



The Harlem Wizards event was a fun night for all



## Rye Neck School Foundation

2024 was quite a year for the RNSF! We launched the RNSF in the spring of 2024 and have been doing incredible work for the Rye Neck School District since then. The mission of the RNSF is to enhance the educational, artistic and athletic opportunities of Rye Neck students beyond what is covered by the District's annual operating budget. The RNSF awards grants to teachers and administrators for innovative programs and initiatives that provide state-of-the-art and cutting edge experiences for our children.

Since August, the RNSF has awarded eight grants, including:

- HS Cell Phone Initiative - zone indicators (laminated "traffic light" signage) are displayed throughout the HS and classrooms to manage students' cell phone usage.
- MS Panthers' Den - a supportive environment available during lunchtime to help facilitate connections and foster friendships among middle school students.
- FEB Life Garden - raised beds for planting in the FEB life garden as part of FEB's sustainability education plan.
- MS Comic Book Club - new middle school after school club where students receive a comic book each month and read/discuss the comic as a club.
- FEB Sensory Tools - sensory diet tools for students at FEB to assist with regulating their alertness, emotional regulation and their organization.
- FEB 5th Grade School Store (Two Grants) - schoolwide store operated and managed by 5th grade students to provide real-world skills in inventory management, budgeting and customer service. Due to its great success, the RNSF recently funded a second grant for extra supplies and prizes.
- FEB One School, One Book Program - program in which the entire Bellows community will read the same book over a three-four week period and participate in daily activities such as trivia questions and classroom discussions, cross grade workshops and a culminating experience for all students.

The RNSF is in the process of reviewing more applications and will be awarding at least three additional grants in the coming weeks.

In December, the RNSF completed our first annual "Give, Grant, Impact" fundraising appeal. Many members of the community contributed to this fundraiser and we raised approximately \$20,000, which will go directly to funding future grants. Thank you to the Rye Neck community for your support.

Our next fundraising event will be a Polar Plunge on March 1st. This will be a fun community event at Mamaroneck Beach and Yacht club. Students (and parents) will be able to sign up individually or as part of a team and win prizes based on the amount of money that each participant raises.

The RNSF recently expanded our board to include Erin Hagstrom, VP of Fundraising and Josh Moreau, VP of Grants. We are always looking for additional support, so please email us at [ryeneckschoolfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:ryeneckschoolfoundation@gmail.com) if you would like to get involved with the RNSF. Please also continue to check our website (<https://www.ryeneckschoolfoundation.org>), and social media pages, to learn about our latest grants and upcoming campaigns.

## A Message to Members of our Community: ParentSquare

Attention Rye Neck residents who do not have children in our schools: Our communications platform has moved to ParentSquare.

If you are a community member who either no longer has students attending our schools or if you simply live within the borders of the Rye Neck district, you can still receive district communications about events, the budget and elections, and other important information.

Please visit our website at [www.ryeneck.org](http://www.ryeneck.org), use the Community Partners dropdown menu, and choose "Rye Neck Residents." This will give you access to a simple form to sign up for those important messages. Even if you completed this before, you have to do it again now that our system has changed.

If you have a child/children currently enrolled in our schools, you already have access to ParentSquare.

## Mark Your Calendar!

- February 26, 2025 | Early Release Day
- March 6-9, 2025 | RNHS Musical Performances
- March 12, 2025 | Daniel Warren Science Fair
- March 19, 2025 | FEB Science Expo
- March 21, 2025 | Superintendent's Conf. Day (staff only)
- March 26, 2025 | Early Release Day
- April 5, 2025 | Panther Palooza Track Invitational
- April 14-18, 2025 | Spring Recess (schools closed)
- April 26, 2025 | PTSA Panther Party
- April 30, 2025 | Early Release Day
- May 5-9, 2025 | Teacher Appreciation Week
- May 14, 2025 | Elementary Art Show Family Night
- May 20, 2025 | Budget and Board Trustee Vote
- May 26, 2025 | Memorial Day (schools closed)
- June 5-6, 2025 | RNMS Theater Production
- June 19, 2025 | Juneteenth (schools closed)
- June 25, 2025 | RNHS Graduation
- June 26, 2025 | Last Day of School

## Follow Rye Neck on Social Media

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@RNHSathletics

@RyeNeckSchools

@RyeNeckSchools

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Dear Rye Neck Resident

### Administration: 914-777-5252

Dr. Eric Lutinski, Superintendent  
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance  
Corinne Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

