BOE Meeting, August 24, 2026 **Superintendent's Remarks**

Welcome back to the 2026-2027 school year! It is an absolute privilege to welcome the entire Rye Neck school community back for another exciting year. Our campus has been bustling with activity all summer as we finalize preparations for our students' return. Over the last two months, administrators have meticulously coordinated schedules, while our clerical staff worked tirelessly on welcome activities and communications. I want to extend a special note of gratitude to our exceptional maintenance and custodial teams, whose hard work has left our facilities looking magnificent and ready for day one. The team closed open items and took the initiative on other items to go above and beyond for our students. Carl Mangone and his grounds team deserved to be specifically mentioned as they were able to cut, line, and prepare the fields despite the excessive amount of rain this summer. Additionally, I'd like to commend our new head custodian Brian Crawford and the Daniel Warren crew for coordinating the work done to the new floor and walls in the gym, which is great for our K-2 students and staff. Looking ahead, the physical upgrades hold particular significance for our community this year as we approach our upcoming Bond Referendum vote on Thursday, October 1st.

Staffing remains a top priority each new year, and we are proud to have successfully filled 17 vacancies ahead of the first day of school. This talented group of incoming professionals includes teaching assistants, school psychologists, teachers, office assistants, a school social worker, a media specialist, a school nurse, and a reading teacher. We are excited to officially welcome them to our community during our new staff orientation this Wednesday. Shortly after, our veteran staff will return on August 31st for two dedicated days of professional preparation, ensuring we are fully ready to welcome our students back on Wednesday, September 2nd.

As I shared in my recent Welcome Back message to our district staff, educators constantly walk a fine line of adaptation. We continuously absorb new insights, experiences, and methodologies, weaving them into our professional identities. Navigating this shifting landscape, especially against the backdrop of cutting-edge technology like AI, is both incredibly exciting and deeply complex.Yet, despite these shifting dynamics, the fundamental mission of the Rye Neck School District remains absolute. For years, our educational framework has been anchored by the pillars of "Learn, Achieve, Lead." To fully embrace the continuous innovation required in today's world, we are proud to launch our new district tagline: Think Deeply. Care Greatly. Act Boldly. This message perfectly aligns with the core objectives of our three-year strategic plan, which culminates at the end of this school year in June 2027. I extend my sincere thanks to Ms. Corinne Ryan, our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, for her brilliant and dedicated leadership. Working collaboratively with our entire administration and staff, her efforts continue to drive lasting, meaningful change for our students.

As a reminder, our three guiding goals are:

- ***Empower Critical Problem-Solvers:*** Equip all learners to approach challenges by asking questions, exploring unique solutions, taking definitive action, and reflecting on outcomes.

- ***Foster Empathy & Connection:*** Build transformative environments that cultivate empathy, compassion, and global connection, creating learning experiences that instill a sense of purpose inside and outside the classroom.
- ***Cultivate Professional Excellence:*** Design collaborative systems for our professional learning community to develop cutting-edge practices and expertise, leading to transformational experiences for both educators and students.

Keep an eye out for our new district tagline and emblem, which will be proudly displayed across school district communications throughout the year.

Our Athletic Department has already kicked off the year, with over 330 student-athletes and 33 coaches actively preparing for the fall season. This includes more than 200 varsity and JV competitors, alongside an additional 130 modified athletes. This smooth transition into the season would not be possible without our dedicated nursing staff, who worked tirelessly to clear all critical sports medical registrations.

We are excited to enter our second year using ParentSquare, our primary communications platform designed to keep you deeply connected to the Rye Neck community. This tool ensures you receive timely, consistent updates regarding your child's education and school activities. We extend our sincere gratitude to Mary Lanza, Director of Technology & Communications, for her ongoing dedication to helping both new and returning families seamlessly adopt this platform.

I am deeply grateful to the entire Rye Neck community for such an incredible welcome during my first year. Your thoughtful conversations, discussions, and insights have been instrumental in guiding our school district forward. Later today, the Board of Education and I will meet to establish our district goals for the upcoming school year, ensuring your feedback is directly reflected in our vision. The school district truly serves as the centerpiece of our community, and when authentic collaboration occurs between our schools and families, extraordinary things happen for our students.

We remain deeply indebted to our PTSA, Booster Club, and the Rye Neck School Foundation for their unwavering support of our students, teachers, and district. Their tireless work, dedication, and immense generosity enrich our schools daily. It is this unique spirit of collaboration and community investment that truly makes Rye Neck such a special place to live and learn.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the members of our Board of Education, who volunteer their time, energy, and heartfelt insight to serve Rye Neck at the highest level. Given our students' academic and extracurricular success, paired with our relentless drive to provide the best opportunities inside and out of the classroom, serving on this Board is an incredibly demanding role. I want to specifically thank President Halli Gatenio for her willingness to lead our Board this year, and Ms. Erica Wagner for her exceptional, ongoing leadership as outgoing President and current Vice President. I also extend my appreciation to Trustees Ruth Homberg and Alex Rainert for their incredible insight and support as they enter their second year, Ms. Laurel Ryan for bringing a wealth of experience and years of dedicated

volunteerism to her first term as trustee, and Ms. Gabby Danza, whose enthusiasm and impressive professional background provide fantastic insight across multiple areas of our district operations.

I will conclude just as I began, by emphasizing the critical importance of our upcoming Bond Referendum vote on Thursday, October 1st. This multi-year initiative is the direct result of extensive community feedback, meticulous planning, and the exceptional short- and long-term fiscal management of Ms. Carolyn Mahar, our Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance. Because of this careful preparation, Rye Neck is perfectly positioned to provide our students, families, and entire community with the modern resources necessary to remain highly competitive with neighboring school districts.To learn more, please join Ms. Mahar and myself for our final live stream this Wednesday night at 7:00 PM. During this concise, ten-minute information session, we will outline the project's scope from both a resource and financial perspective. Additionally, please keep an eye out for upcoming opportunities throughout September to learn more about how this bond project will benefit our schools.

Thank you once again to the entire Rye Neck community for your incredible, ongoing support. I am absolutely thrilled to welcome our children back into our schools on Wednesday, September 2nd, as we kick off another fantastic year together.