Dear RCSD Community Member,

Beginning with this issue of the Bulletin, we’ll be providing you with a snapshot look into what remote learning is like in our schools for students, parents, and teachers.

While no one can hope to replicate the experience of being in a classroom with live teaching and interaction with other students, our teachers are working hard to make sure students continue to receive the excellent education our schools are known for. And it’s not just students who are learning remotely. Our parents have been participating in virtual parent university classes in droves, and our teachers are eagerly diving into professional development online. If there’s an educational silver lining to this terrible cloud, it may be that we all learn new skills that will enable us to continue to learn, thrive, and grow in this new world we find ourselves in.

Sincerely,

Eric Byrne, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Budget Update, by Superintendent Byrne

Those of you who follow the Rye City School District budget process know that by this time of year, we would normally have an accepted school district budget for the next school year and would be busily preparing for the community vote on that budget. This year’s annual budget vote and trustee election was to take place on Tuesday, May 19. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Order that all school district budget votes are to be postponed until at least June 1, 2020. No date has yet been determined for the delayed school budget vote.

During his daily press briefings, he has also indicated that he expects that New York State will experience large budget shortfalls this year due to declining tax revenues. Given that, the Board of Education and I have gone back to the original Superintendent’s Recommended Budget for the 2020-21 school year to look for areas of potential cost-cutting. As always, it is our goal to keep these reductions as far away from our instructional program as possible to lessen the impact on students. We will keep the community apprised of any information from the Governor about the rescheduling of the budget vote and changes to the School District’s budget for the year to come.
Middle School world languages chair and 6th grade teacher Dawn King combined two apps, Kami and Edpuzzle, to create an impactful Spanish lesson for her students. Kami is an online document annotation and markup tool. Teachers use it to highlight, underline, and strikethrough text and add text boxes, shapes, and images. Edpuzzle is an assessment-centered tool that allows teachers to create interactive online videos by embedding either open-ended or multiple-choice questions, audio notes, audio tracks, or comments on a video. Put them together, and you get a really great tool for foreign language instruction.

Remote Learning for Students

Rye High School

Author Neil Shubin showed AP Biology students his fossil collection via Google Hangout.

Rye High School science teacher Suzanne Abramson’s AP Biology students recently had an amazing online experience. The class just finished Neil Shubin’s book *Your Inner Fish: A Journey Into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body* and spent 40 minutes with the author on Google Hangout. Dr. Shubin showed them replicas of fossils (including his famous Tiktaalik fossil), told stories, and answered their questions. Ms. Abramson noted she was extremely proud of the quality of the students’ questions!

Remote Learning for Students

Rye Middle School

Middle School Special Education teacher Michelle Garafano reports that her SALT (Students Advancing Learning Together) squad has been staying busy hiking, cooking, and sending each other snail mail during remote learning.

Take care of one another.

A student trying out old fashioned snail mail.
Katy Buderman, a special education teacher from Osborn School, can meet each of her student’s needs using Google Hangouts. Ms. Buderman and the student “touch and tell” what she wants to write on her page about convincing others. They count the words that she wants to write. Mom writes the yellow lines, so the student knows exactly where to put each word. The student is then able to stretch out the words she wants to write and use her snap word cards posted on her wall, with support. She is writing a message about reminding people to put their trash in the garbage!

Midland School third grade teacher Katharine Sweeney’s class began by using Google Hangouts to chat and connect, but soon found that it is also an incredibly useful tool for small group math help.

Milton School physical education teacher Becky Ward has been doing online lessons for students. A recent lesson focused on skill-related fitness. After a vocabulary review, she introduced the students to an app called Homecourt which uses artificial intelligence to help users work on all of the skill-related fitness components (agility, speed, coordination, reaction time, balance, and power). She included a video demonstration of how to use the app, using herself as an example!
Remote Learning for Parents

Students aren’t the only ones in online school. The District has been offering weekly optional Parent University sessions remotely to help parents get up to speed on the technology their students are using, connect with administrators about special education and curriculum or just chat with the technology team. Now in their 4th week, the Parent University classes have been fully subscribed. The District plans to continue to offer more and expand upon their offerings in response to parent interest.

Remote Learning for Faculty/Staff

The Rye City School District’s professional development team has offered several virtual learning opportunities for its teachers since the beginning of remote instruction. Offerings from the technology department include sessions in using Hangout, Flipgrid, Hyperdocs, and Edpuzzle, among others.

The District’s literacy and math staff developers have instructed teachers in using programs like Epic and Kami, as well as suggesting ways to adapt instructional practice and curriculum for remote learning.

The special education department’s offerings range from differentiation to providing accommodations and modifications virtually.

The professional development team has also facilitated more informal ”snack and chats” allowing teachers to come together to ask questions and to share ideas and best practices. To date, each week, there are over 150 teachers participating in the offerings across all grades and schools.

Parent Support Helpline

The Rye Youth Council, in conjunction with local mental health professionals, has launched a confidential parent support helpline. Parents and other adults can use the helpline to be referred to appropriate local mental health resources. The phone number is 914-222-0988, and the corresponding email is parentsupport@ryeyouthcouncil.org. The Parent Support Line operates Monday to Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Rye Art Responds Project Colors Rye Strong

Rye art teachers put out the call for members of the Rye community to use sidewalk chalk to send messages of support, hope, and love for first responders, healthcare workers, and others on the front line of the pandemic. And boy did they respond! Photos of heartwarming artwork on driveways, sidewalks, and posters flooded in. Project collaborator Big Picture Foundation collected the photos and is hosting them on its website here. RMS 8th grader Cole Thomas created a moving video of the artwork. Thank you to all the administrators, teachers, parents, and students who came together to make this idea a reality!
Rye High School Students Take High Honors in Science

Rye High School junior Breanna Brownson entered the New York State Science and Engineering Fair, held virtually this year due to the Coronavirus crisis. For the first round, she submitted a 6-minute video presenting her research project, “Use of cardioprotective paracrine factors secreted by human germline pluripotent stem cell-derived cardiomyocytes to prevent fibroblast activation and scar formation following myocardial infarction.” She was selected to move on to the lightning round finals. She presented her research to six judges, followed by a question and answer session during a Zoom video call. She won the NYSSEF ISEF 2020 Best in Fair (Highest Honors) and was named a Regeneron ISEF (International Science and Engineering Fair) Finalist. By winning this award, she qualified to compete at ISEF in Anaheim, California, in May. ISEF is one of the most prestigious high school science research competitions in the world. Unfortunately, ISEF was cancelled this year because of coronavirus concerns. Breanna is the first Rye High School student to be named an ISEF Finalist. Another Rye High School junior, Laya Gollamudi, also competed in NYSSEF and was awarded High Honors. NYSSEF awards are listed here: https://www.nyssef.org/awards/

COMMENDATIONS

Senior RHS basketball starting guard Rafael Velasquez is hosting “Handles from Home,” an online basketball clinic to benefit COVID-19 frontline workers. He was featured in an article in the Journal News.

Junior RHS basketball point guard Natasha Meyer has been making masks for area hospitals. She was featured in a segment on NBC News.

In boys basketball, Quinn Kelly was named to the All-State Team (4th Team), as was Matthew Tepedino (12th Team). Kelly (2nd Team) and Tepedino (Honorable Mention) were also selected for the 2019-20 Westchester/Putnam All-Star Team.

In girls basketball, junior Amanda Latkany (1st Team) senior Teaghan Flaherty (Honorable Mention) were selected for the Westchester/Putnam All-Star Team.

In hockey, senior Declan Lavelle is the Lo Hud 2019-20 Player of the Year. Coach Peter Thomas is the Lo Hud New York State Coach of the Year. Declan Lavelle, Emmet Carroll, and Anabelle Thomas were recognized as All-State.

In track, Katie Coyne was selected to the Westchester All County Indoor Track Team in both the 300 meters and 600 meters.

US News & World Report’s 2020 list of Best High Schools has ranked Rye High School number 12 in New York State and number 125 in the U.S.