

Message to Rye Parents

At the February 29th Rye School Board Meeting, the administration presented, on behalf of the Middle School Structure Committee, a model for restructuring Rye Junior High. This recommended model reflects research-based practices for achieving our “Vision for Education in Rye” for all students (see below).

The Rye School District has been experiencing declining enrollments due to fewer families with children living in our town. However, the Rye School Board is committed to maintaining a high quality education while continuing to be fiscally-responsible to the Rye taxpayers. To that end, the Rye School Board felt it necessary to eliminate two full-time positions from Rye Junior High and one from Rye Elementary School for the 2016-2017 school year.

Why did we make this decision? Based on the current numbers, we project having 64, 47, and 50 students in 8th, 7th, and 6th grade, respectively next year. Having 50 students, for example, divided among four core teachers, means that we would have classes of 13 or fewer students in each class. This is not fiscally sustainable and not educationally ideal. The October 2013 Report from the Class Size Committee recommended class sizes for grades 6-8 of 18-22 students per class. The committee considered the educational and social needs of students along with financial issues and, to the maximum extent possible, based these recommendations on empirical research and best practices. The numbers get even smaller in subsequent years, so the Board felt the time to act was now to create a solution that could be sustained for the foreseeable future.

The Rye School Board and staff have engaged in a year-long planning process involving the community, staff, and students that led to a powerful “Vision for Education in Rye.” The Rye School Board tasked the Middle School Structure Committee, consisting of administrators and faculty to:

- Research best practices that enact the “Vision for Education in Rye” and
- Recommend a model for restructuring Rye Junior High that reflects these best practices to successfully achieve our “Vision for Education in Rye” for all students.

The Middle School Structure Committee considered a number of models for restructuring the Rye Junior High educational program. The Recommended Model proposed by the Middle School Structure Committee was shared with Rye Junior High faculty in January, and the Rye School Board solicited community input at the February School Board meeting. We heard strong support for maintaining Language Arts as a core content area at each grade level.

The following **Recommended Model** reflects this input:

6 th grade	Math Science Language Arts with integrated Social Studies (Civilization and Culture)
7 th grade	Math Science Language Arts with integrated Social Studies (American Studies I)
8 th grade	Math

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Science

Language Arts with integrated Social Studies (Americans Studies II)

Benefits of the recommended model:

- Maintains small class size and grade-level teams.
- Continues to maintain and increase focus on Language Arts while integrating Social Studies concepts, literacy skills, and the Unified Arts across all content areas.
- Encourages team-teaching, curricular integration, and extended student projects that demonstrate deeper learning.
- Promotes team control over instructional time, longer class periods, and equality of time-per-class.
- Better balances teaching responsibilities across the faculty.
- Supports increased community involvement.
- Maintains current Rye Junior High faculty after expected retirements.

Possible Unintended Consequences:

- Scheduling challenges (e.g. students having an open block that becomes a study period).
- Potentially less attention to some social studies content.
- Some faculty may decide that they do not want to teach in this model and pursue other options.
- Teacher may need to update current certification.

Why this model? Alternative models increase class size, spread teachers over multiple grade levels, reduce integration across content areas, and pose significant scheduling issues.

What is the timeline for Implementation? Staffing will be determined this spring. Curriculum will be developed for Language Arts with integrated Social Studies and teaching literacy skills across the content areas over the spring, summer and fall. A project-based approach to demonstrating student learning will be implemented across content areas over the next three years.

The Rye School Board plans to discuss the recommended 2016-2017 Rye Junior High School structure at their next board meeting on March 16th. Please contact Principal Chris Pollet, Superintendent Petralia, or members of the Rye School Board if you have concerns or feedback.

Sincerely,

Chris Pollet, RJH Principal

Scott Marion, Rye School Board Chair

Sal Petralia, Superintendent of Schools

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“Vision for Education in Rye”

Students leaving Rye schools are engaged learners able to exercise control over their education and have the work habits to be able to meet their own and others’ expectations for learning. They understand that effort and openness to learning are the most important factors in their success. They know how to persevere through challenging academic tasks. Rye students are curious learners and creative thinkers who have developed the knowledge and skills to reflect on and further their education and life experiences.

Rye students have a deep understanding of the major concepts in all content areas and are able to apply that learning into new situations. Students are well-prepared to enter the next level of their education because they have been meaningfully challenged and well-educated. They possess strong research and critical thinking skills allowing them to investigate and solve complex problems. They are able to communicate effectively using a variety of media, especially written and oral. Rye students use technology effectively to support and demonstrate their learning across all content areas.

Rye students are confident, respectful of themselves and others, and contribute positively as citizens. They understand how to collaborate to maximize their own and the groups’ learning. Rye students have the skills to get along with their peers and other members of the community. They are open-minded and have learned to understand others’ perspectives. Importantly, they are empathetic as demonstrated by their understanding of how their words and actions affect others.