



**Rye School District Administrator Updates**  
**Michelle Pitts, Principal, RES**  
**Anne Gilbert, Principal, RJH**

**April 17, 2024**

**Goal 1:** *Maintain a culture that is positive, welcoming, and supportive to all stakeholders, including staff, families, students, and community stakeholders.*

**Rye Elementary School**

-We have welcomed several visitors to RES recently. The Audubon came to teach our preschool and kindergarten students about various reptiles, birds and mammals, even bringing a real snake for the children to see and touch. Elizabeth McKinney, the author of "What Makes Me Special?" and "My Buddy Bryant: A Story of Friendship & Dyspraxia" spoke with first graders about writing and her own life experiences. Lastly, Mr. Gianforte came to teach us all we needed to know about the eclipse.

-RES continues to reach out to families and community members so we can tap into the talent and resources that we know exist in our town. Dr. Knauss, a parent and dentist, came to health class to teach children about dental health. If you know of any local community members who might have a skill or interest they would want to share with our students, please have them reach out to us at school.

-We would like to invite School Board members to our upcoming Earth Day celebration on April 19 at 8:30 AM.

**Rye Junior High School**

-We received word from the NH Excellence in Education Committee that RJH was not named as the Middle School of the Year. However, RJH is receiving special recognition for exemplary student and community empowerment. As a RJH parent recently put it, "Like Ohio, we made it to the final game, and we didn't win. But one loss doesn't take away from the success of the team all season long." Please see the EDies response:

*I want to thank you for a wonderful visit that our committee had at your school. We enjoyed meeting and speaking to your staff, students, and community members. It was very clear to us all during our visit the empowerment and voice students, staff, and community stakeholders have in your school.*

*It was also evident the role that you play in all of this. Since you have taken the leadership role, your school has flourished and is moving in the right direction. Teachers shared with us next steps would include common assessments for the social studies standards and your district and school is moving forward with the Portrait of a Learner.*

*Because of all of this, our committee has recommended to the EDIES that your school be given a special recognition award for the following. I am including what we wrote to the board:*

*The middle school of the year committee would like to award Rye Jr. High a special recognition award for exemplary student and community empowerment. At Rye Jr. High, there is student ownership of voice. Students are able to choose the direction their learning will take through choice in Explore courses and Social Studies seminars. Teachers are able to choose what they will offer through seminars and a great deal of thought is put into these integrated units and lesson plans by the teachers. Finally, the community is fully involved at Rye Jr. High. After-school offerings are available to students at the library and community center. Parents are involved in the Parent's Advisory Committee tackling ways to continuously improve the school. Rye Jr. High empowers student leadership, student choice, and community involvement in these ways that make them deserving of this award.*

*Unfortunately, this also means that you did not receive the middle school of the year recognition. Your school is certainly moving in that direction and once you have the things you are working on fully in place, we hope that you will apply again.*

-From March 25-29, RJH Neurodiversity Awareness Week was organized with parent support. On Monday, we welcomed Megg Thompson, a local certified behavioral consultant, to speak to our students about what neurodiversity entails, and strategies that support neurodiverse thinking. Our students found it very informative, connected with the information on a personal level, and had excellent questions. On Wednesday, a team of volunteers came to RJH to host a "Neurodiversity Fair". Students traveled to ten different stations to experience some challenges that folks face around problem solving, mobility, processing information, and sensory sensitivities. Our goal was to increase awareness and help students develop empathy for all types of learners.

-On April 1, RJH was fortunate to host Recycled Percussion for an assembly. Our students were able to experience music in a completely novel way (think blenders and ladders), but the real focus was on kindness and community. The band also told their story and how they persevered through challenges to achieve their goals. Their company, Chaos & Kindness, supports communities in New Hampshire and beyond in meaningful ways.

<p><b>Goal 2:</b> <i>Ensure students have equal access to a rigorous and personalized learning experience.</i></p>
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### **Rye Elementary School**

-Students in grade 4 have been working on their passion projects. Students have chosen topics close to their heart (ex:Broadway, cats, skiing, the Los Angeles Lakers and Michigan) and are in the process of creating multiple writing projects with this passion in mind. Students are journaling, creating resumes, poetry slams, brochures, letters to the editor and more. This writing series allows students to research a topic that interests them to become experts, eventually presenting their final work to a larger audience within the Rye community.

-In a true cross collaborative effort, second graders are creating published books about birds, which they are learning about in outdoor education, researching in their classroom and creating artistic renditions of in art class. This becomes a class book available for purchase!

-Students in Kindergarten have been creating their own browsing boxes with decodable texts and picture books. Each child in Mrs. Scally's class came to read to the principal last week and it was incredible to spend this time with these readers and feel their excitement and pride.

-The Kindergarten screening team has planned a myriad of opportunities for our incoming students to gain information about their academic and social skills so we can be most prepared for their arrival in August. We have also added a family input survey so we can learn as much as we can from those who know these children best. We use the Brigance screener but will add a number recognition/subitizing component, fine motor task and an opportunity for social interaction. The team will share a broad scope of the results with families following their appointment at RES in June.

-Teachers in grades 1 and 2 spent time calibrating their pedagogy around writing by first exploring writing samples from grades 3 and 4. By identifying what they noticed about their former writers and then overlaying the skills they are teaching in grades 1 and 2, they had important conversations about vertical alignment and clear expectations across grade levels. By using the data-driven dialogue protocol, teachers were able to identify the need to maintain a writing program, *Step Up to Writing*, for one more year, to achieve consistency for students, until we can explore the possibility of a reading/writing program.

### **Rye Junior High School**

So many learning opportunities have happened for students at RJH! Some highlights include:

- Eighth graders visiting the Auschwitz Exhibition in Boston as part of their Holocaust and genocide social studies curriculum (thank you, REF!).
- Eighth graders also wrapped up a Biosphere project, which was an interdisciplinary experience between science and language arts. Students learned about food webs, the necessary needs of all species, and the creation of biospheres. Students were then charged with creating and building a biosphere that would support human, animal, and plant life, and be indefinitely self-sustaining. In language arts, students created a brochure that promoted their group's biosphere (argumentative writing), and created a science fiction Choose Your Own Adventure story (narrative writing). All of this work was displayed at a Biosphere Expo, at which visitors could invest in promising biosphere designs.
- Seventh grade teachers are planning a Renaissance unit, which will culminate in a Renaissance Fair in June. The kick off to the project was a day-long visit to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, to immerse students in art from the time period in order to better understand it.

- Sixth graders recently finished their Hot Topics argumentative writing experience. Students learned effective strategies for researching a topic of interest, and writing an argumentative essay outlining the details of their position. Students also had to present their work to their peers, which allowed them to practice those very important speaking and listening skills.
- Fifth graders learned about animal adaptations, and how the evolutionary process operates. They were then charged with creating a Future Creature, where they imagined a current animal and how it would adapt 5,000 years into the future. Students also had to defend why the animal adapted in specific ways.

**Goal 3:** *Prepare our students to be engaged citizens, understanding the impact they can make locally, nationally and globally.*

### **Rye Elementary School**

-Ten years ago, Joe Whitten started Apparel Impact with the goal to keep clothes, shoes, accessories and textiles out of landfills, mobilize resources to help end local poverty, and create a company that truly makes a difference. On Friday, March 22, he challenged the third and fourth grade students of Rye Elementary to help. Nearly 10% of all trash in local landfills are textiles. Apparel Impact provides towns and organizations with the opportunity to reduce that number by reusing and recycling textiles headed toward the trash. Whitten challenged students to look around their homes, gather any textiles headed for the trash and bring them to school to see if they can fill an Apparel Impact truck on Friday, April 19, the date of RES's Earth Day celebration.

-Staci Ryan and I have been running a group for first graders titled, "The I Can Crew." This group has been learning about power phrases, empowerment, confidence and the importance of being kind to oneself and others. This is an incredible group of girls who have incredible voices and leadership skills that they are refining through this work as a team. They are learning to say, "I can" to hard things and building pride in their many talents and positive characteristics.

### **Rye Junior High School**

-On March 28, our RJH community came together for the first annual Cultural Potluck. Many families brought their favorite dishes that represented a wide variety of cultures from around the world. The food was delicious, and the community feeling was supportive and welcoming. Many thanks to our Parent Advisory Committee for organizing and promoting this event!

-A well loved community event is the annual RJH drama production. From April 10-13, our talented young performers presented "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" for an appreciative audience. Thank you to our wonderful drama staff: Jeffrey, Josh, Miles, and Joan, and the many parents and community members who worked to help bring the production together.

-The solar eclipse was fully appreciated and enjoyed by our staff and students. All students were given eclipse glasses for safe viewing. We were also very fortunate to have a digital solar telescope, recently funded by REF. Thank you so much!

## *Last but not least...*

### **Happening at both RES and RJH...**

- We had a solar eclipse! Students and staff were so flexible and educated before the big event that it made for a truly memorable and enjoyable experience. We are collecting eclipse glasses at both schools so please don't throw them away!

### **Rye Schools would like to thank...**

- Our paraprofessionals are amazing! Our schools could not operate without their attention to detail, dedication to our students, and most of all, their willingness to work as a team. We celebrated you on National Paraprofessional Day on April 3, but your work is appreciated every day.
- Thank you to the office staff for managing the award winning "Most Early Dismissals" on eclipse day. You are out of this world! In addition, April 18 is Administrative Assistant Day so another huge thank you to the office staff for their tireless efforts every day. We are so appreciative of you!