Message from Superintendent
Janet Warden

Dear Parents and Students of RHCSD:

This past week marked the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have overcome obstacles and achieved successes as individuals, families, a community and a school organization. I would like to specifically thank first responders and medical professionals on the front lines caring for COVID patients. I also commend schools for shifting their entire organization and infrastructure within weeks to meet the needs of families. In a year’s time, we could not have predicted the amount of loss we have encountered and the significant effects on our world.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many students across our country have had limited or no opportunities for in-person learning. Our hybrid and full-remote schedules in Red Hook, while not perfect, have provided students with structure and routine. We have experienced many obstacles throughout this process, and we continue to learn from one another as we move forward. The decision to expand reopening further is in the investigation phase. We are committed to doing what is right for our community in a thoughtful manner. (See below for more information.) There are many factors under consideration in our discussions to stay the course with our current programs and schedules or to expand them with more time and additional enhancements.

We are also carefully planning summer school opportunities and our Summer Academy offerings to address existing and anticipated needs of our students. As we begin to look ahead to the start of the 2021-22 school year in September, we know that we will build upon the lessons learned this past year. How can we continue to grow as a school community from this experience? On Tuesday, April 27, we will host a virtual Red Hook Community Forum to gain insight from the community. The forum flier is included below. Please consider attending and voicing your thoughts on the future of the Red Hook Central School District.

Our Students are the BEST!

Kathryn Kelly, RHHS Senior
Kate was accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy. The academy is a prestigious school with an 8.5% acceptance rate. Congratulations, Kate, and best wishes for your future successes!

RHBC
Red Hook Broadcasting Club promotes pride in our community and celebrates good news. Students create media updates for their peers and school staff. Haven’t had a chance to see RHBC in action? Check it out at http://www.rhbchighlights.org/

Hudson Bucci, RHHS Senior
Hudson recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout - an outstanding achievement in the Boy Scouts of America. Hudson’s Eagle Scout project was the construction and installation of six outdoor seating benches for our schools’ grounds!

Morgan Tompkins, RHHS Junior
Morgan has scored her 1,000 career basket as a Raiders Basketball player! Morgan is a junior and is already being scouted by several Division 1 colleges! We look forward to watching Morgan on the basketball court next year.
EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY (EDI) WORK

The Leadership Team has participated in two intensive learning sessions with Education Elements over the past month. We are exploring systems and structures in education with an EDI lens. We also investigated the beliefs and conditions that contribute to inequities in our educational systems. Our next step is to launch a systems inventory where we will focus on two areas: academics and culture.

“Diversity is a fact, inclusion is a strategy, belonging is a measure, and equity is the goal.”
-Dereca Blackmon

STATE/REGENTS TESTING

New York State Education Department (NYSED) continues to wait on decision from the United States Department of Education (USDE) on its waiver request for both grade 3 - 8 assessments and Regents exams.

It was determined that it is not possible to administer state assessments remotely. Therefore, NYSED has provided more flexibility in the test administration. If the requested waiver is not granted by the USDE for Spring 2021, schools will be required to administer Session 1 of ELA and Math only. Session 1 results will be used for a student's test score and the tests will not include the multiple-choice field test questions.

Principals will be sending out information on whether you would like to have your child participate in these assessments.

Additional flexibility for 3 - 8 assessments include:
* Students are not expected to come to the school for tests. We will be asking remote families if they would like to participate in the test.
* We have a longer duration to administer the test to accommodate a hybrid schedule.
* We do not need to have uniform testing schedule.

Grades 3 - 8 English Language Arts test administration dates are Monday, April 19 to Thursday, April 29.
Grades 3 - 8 Mathematics test administration dates are Monday, May 3 to Friday, May 14.

We are in a similar situation for Regents exams. As of the latest NYSED memo, only four June 2021 Regents Exams will be administered, they are English Language Arts, Algebra I, Living Environment, and Earth Science. The August 2021 Regents Exams have been cancelled. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Budget Information

The end of the 2019-2020 fiscal year and the beginning of the 2020-2021 fiscal year have been marked by significant levels of unanticipated expenditures related to COVID. These expenditures have been more than offset by savings from the curtailment of many of the normal activities of the District. Additionally, there has been significant uncertainty about the level of aid payments from New York State both for the current 2020-2021 fiscal year and the 2021-2022 budget year which begins July 1. In the midst of programmatic uncertainty, expenditure uncertainty, and revenue uncertainty for 2021-2022, we are still well positioned to meet the spring deadlines for budget development. We await finalization of the New York State budget for education and finalization of federal payments related to the stimulus packages that have been approved at the federal level. We plan to provide an outline of the proposed 2021-2022 school budget to the community at the March 24th Board of Education meeting.
EXPANDED REOPENING INFORMATION

The Expanded Reopening Committee, with input from the Board of Education, will decide how to enhance the current hybrid model for the remainder of this school year. All factors and scenarios are being considered with our deeper understandings about quarantining, mitigation strategies, and the overall curriculum and learning needs of our students.

The following is a list of our top variables under consideration regarding expanded reopening or remaining in our current hybrid and remote schedules. Each variable will be analyzed at each school building and decisions reached for each school:

1. Health and safety protocols: the use of barriers, the ability to socially distance students, and the developmental age of students.
2. Schedule and teacher changes and the impact on students at each level. Schedules were constructed in September to limit exposure, to ensure social distancing and to provide equitable education to remote learners. Changing the schedules this late in the school year could cause more disruption and undue stress.
3. Ability to quickly shift to a reduced capacity: the Dutchess County Department of Health states it is imperative for schools to be able to pivot back to reduced capacity in our classrooms (hybrid schedules) if conditions change, such as increase in positivity rate and/or changes in virus variants. This poses difficulties for each building’s current schedule.
4. Our most at-risk students have had full day instruction since the beginning of the school year. We have phased in other students with learning needs. We will prioritize their needs as we look to expand reopening.

Our goal is to make the best decision for our community. We will provide our findings and recommendations at the Wednesday, March 24th Board of Education meeting.

Auditorium Project Updates

Photo to left: southwest facades of the new addition.

Photo below: auditorium interior from the stage.
Red Hook Auditorium Update

The Red Hook Central School District Auditorium is nearing completion. Contractors are working to finish the remaining work in their assigned contracts. Inspections are being conducted, and the commissioning process will soon be underway to ensure the building HVAC systems are functioning as designed. Once these items are completed, documentation will be submitted to the Office of Facilities Planning at New York State Education Department to secure the Certificate of Occupancy.

We are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to use the new 700-seat theater space. Comfortable, tiered-seating will provide a great view of the stage from any location in the house. The stage rigging, lighting, and sound systems will be appreciated by audience and performers alike. The light-filled lobby and connecting corridor provide large open walls, perfect for displaying artwork of all types and sizes.

Look for an upcoming announcement for the ribbon cutting and grand opening event!
DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM (DLT) UPDATE

Our Red Hook Conversations Forum has been rescheduled for April 27th with sessions at 9 am and again at 7 pm. We are looking for conversations about our school budget process, mental health services, academics, communication, and equity; not only for the upcoming school year but for years to come. What are the district's areas of strength and where are our opportunities for growth? These conversations will enable the DLT to prioritize the needs of our community and set goals for our future. (See additional information below.)

Spring Break Information

As we approach the week of Spring Break (March 29th through April 2nd) we would like to remind you that information changes daily from New York State on travel advisories. As a reminder, we follow the COVID-19 policies and restrictions of the NYS Department of Health. Travel information can be found at: https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-quarantine-domestic-travel-will-no-longer-be-required-starting-april

Despite the restrictions being lifted, it is essential to follow safety protocols like mask wearing and social distancing. Please monitor your health if you plan to travel. If you have any symptoms, please stay home, and contact our school nurse. If you were exposed to someone with COVID, please quarantine and contact the school nurse. We would like to keep our schools open for in-person learning, but we count on our community support to do this. Let’s work together over spring break to ensure the health and safety of our community and not add to more positive cases, quarantining or possibly having to pivot to remote.

2020–2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR UPDATE

As of today, the Red Hook Central School District still has one remaining snow day.

If this day is not used, the District plans on providing a “give back” day which will be Friday, May 28th. Stay tuned for an official announcement...weather permitting!
Join us for...

Red Hook CONVERSATIONS Supporting Success Discovery Driven

A Conversation with our Community Via Zoom

• Conversation Matters
This has been a difficult year for our children. Conversation is important for discovering what we value. It is how we share knowledge, imagine a future and create commitment to our school community. We will examine lessons learned while reimagining our future in education.

• What to expect?
  • Small group conversations in an informal setting
  • An opportunity to think together about our future
  • A chance to learn from each other
  • An opportunity to impact the future of our school community

• Why Attend?
We are beginning a strategic planning process to examine our vision, mission, goals, and future outcomes. We need your thinking about what works well at our school now and what areas need growth.

Please attend and help shape our future!

WHEN: April 27, 2021

Times: (choose one):
  • 9 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
  • 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Space will be limited; please RSVP by April 20, 2021 to rconversations@rhcisd.org. A Zoom invite will be provided upon RSVP.

Please send an email to the address above if you need a translator.