



Soaring

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY POINT UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

On the Rise

NUMBER OF AP SCHOLARS ALMOST TRIPLES IN ONE YEAR



“The noticeable success of our students is a direct reflection of their commitment to their studies and the support of our dedicated staff members.”

- Principal John DeBenedetto.

Over the past several years, the district has maintained a strong commitment to expanding its offerings for students, from providing support services for struggling learners to increasing the number of rigorous courses available to high-achieving scholars. As a result of this focus, a growing number of Rocky Point students are achieving at record-high levels.

In June, the district reported a substantial growth in its graduation

rate, both overall and for students with disabilities. This fall, the district is proud to recognize a tremendous increase in the number of students being named Advanced Placement Scholars by the College Board.

Seventy-two members of the Classes of 2014 and 2015 have earned this distinction, based on their cumulative performance on AP exams. This represents almost three times the number named the previous year, 27.

“The noticeable success of our students is a direct reflection of their commitment to their studies and the support of our dedicated staff members,” said Principal John DeBenedetto. “These programs provide our students with the chance to get a jump-start on their college careers and advance their studies. On behalf of the district, I commend our students and thank our teaching and support staff for their commitment to our students’ success.”

COMPLETE LISTING OF *AP Scholars*

NATIONAL AP SCHOLAR

Students who earned an average score of at least 4 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.

Anmol Ghavri
Evan R. Komorowski



AP SCHOLAR WITH DISTINCTION

Students who earned an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams.

Shannon M. Abernethy
Kyle Blessing
Philip J. Buzzanca
Olivia J. Elber
Anmol Ghavri
Thomas P. Gohn
Elizabeth M. Healy

Evan R. Komorowski
Kieran J. Maroney
Julianne N. Martin
Troy S. Richards
Connor C. Sick
Tejas Tope



AP SCHOLAR WITH HONOR

Students who earned an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

Ashley A. Anthony
Ryan Hibbard
Joseph L. Kienzle
Shannon E. Magrane
Shaun H. Martinsen
Lauren M. Mcbrearty
Erin C. McQuade
Nicholas J. Migliore
Joseph S. Niver

Brittany N. Rinaldi
Christina Romano
Tiana Rooney
Kenneth M. Schick
Frankie H. Sciulla
Thomas J. Strazzeri
Antionette R. Timmerman
Julia A. Townsend
Muhammad Yazdanle



AP SCHOLAR

Students who earned scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams.

Stephanie N. Aanonsen
Megan P. Armstrong
Nicole P. Berg
Kevin A. Brown
Erin C. Darners
Louis Duffy
George Fabricatore
Aijia Feng
Eric A. Fenoy
Dana M. Fey
James P. Forbes
Michael T. Franks
Abigail R. Frosina
Alyssa M. Golik
Michael J. Greenberg
Katherine V. Guevara
Taylor Heinz
Sara M. Janus
Steven Kucharczyk
Julia F. Kutsch

Matthew F. Manna
Miranda R. Meola
Erin O. Michelltsch
Rachel B. Parker
Alexander Peck
Andrew J. Salamone
Eric S. Schell
Jeremy Sticco
Robert Strazzeri
Cole D. Sugrue
Jack Sullivan
Amanda J. Tascarella
Colleen A. Taylor
Darren P. Urcuiollo
Jerome T. Vessichio
Sarah E. Viola
Michael J. Volpe
Sarah C. Walsh
Casey D. Williamson

A Message from Your Superintendent

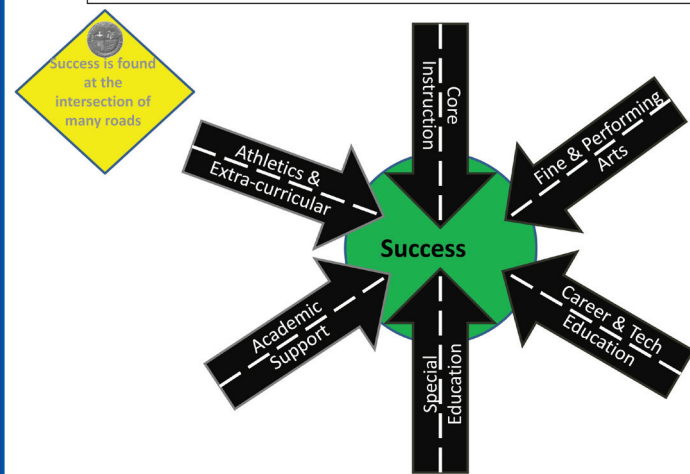
DR. MICHAEL F. RING

It seems like just yesterday that we were welcoming our students and staff back to the start of the school year, and yet here we are in the midst of another wonderful holiday season. It is at this joyous time of year when we often reflect on the things for which we are thankful and eagerly look forward to what the New Year will bring.

As you will read in this edition of Soaring, we as a school community have many reasons to be thankful. As our cover story details, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of Rocky Point students being recognized as Advanced Placement Scholars by the College Board. This phenomenal achievement is due in large part to the nearly 100 percent increase in the number of AP courses being offered at the high school. On this page is an article regarding the numerous support programs we have put in place over the past five school years to provide academic support for our students. The remainder of the publication is rounded out by articles heralding the achievements of our students in the arts, athletics, community service and so much more.

The achievements of our students and the programs that have been instrumental in fostering these achievements are all a part of our multiple pathways to success philosophy. Indeed, as I have said many times, success is found at the intersection of many roads. In Rocky Point, these roads include our rigorous core academic programs, co-curricular activities, special education, fine and performing arts, career and technical education, and academic support programs such as ICARE

The overarching goal: Success for all students



and SHARP, as well as many other pathways.

Regardless of which paths are key to the individual student's success, what is most critical is that we continue to support our exiting pathways and forge new avenues to success. In partnership with students, parents, teachers, support professionals and our Board of Education, I believe we all have much to look forward to in this regard in 2015.

Please accept my warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season and much good fortune in the New Year.

Multiple Opportunities for Student Success

The district's Next S.T.E.P. plan is entering its fifth year of implementation, and the results of the strategic plan are being realized across all focus areas. During an early October PTA meeting, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael F. Ring spoke about the programs created under Next S.T.E.P. and shared the successes they have brought to date.

SHARP – Striving for Higher Achievement at Rocky Point

- Grade K-5 ELA and math after-school support program offered in collaboration with Eastern Suffolk BOCES.
- Serviced 312 students last year.
- Helps remediate deficit skills and enables students to remain on grade level.
- Guided reading approach aligns with the curriculum used in school.
- Focus Math program addresses student needs in the area of math.
- Initial results indicate positive outcomes, with students maintaining or improving in these subject areas.
- A complement summer program is offered to prevent regression in the area of ELA (108 attended in 2014).

Test Preparation

- High school program offered in second and fourth quarters to align with Regents administration.
- Eight-week course for identified grade 3-5 students in advance of ELA and mathematics state assessments.

Alternative High School

- An alternative, nontraditional pathway to high school completion.
- Offers a lower student-to-teacher ratio and opportunities for individualized instruction.
- Most graduates receive a Regents or local diploma.
- To date, 58 students have graduated from the program.

Credit Recovery

- Ten-week blocks of after-school instruction that align with report card periods.
- Allows students to recover credit missed for reasons of attendance and/or performance.
- 110 credits were recovered last year. Over the past three summers, 276 credits were recovered and 298 Regents and RCTs were passed.

ICARE Course Tutoring

- Provides assistance to high school and middle school students who require additional support with specific content.
- Supports students across all disciplines and levels of rigor, including students requiring support at advanced levels.

Enhanced School Security

The district is committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment, and continues to take proactive and appropriate steps to strengthen its defenses against outside risks. The start of the school year brought about the introduction of the following upgrades:

A new electronic visitor management system and enhanced security vestibules are being utilized at each school. Visitors enter through a secured space and are asked to present a valid driver's license. Licenses are scanned and vetted against the district's student management system and compared to the state's sex offender database to ensure the safety of the student population. Once authorization is provided, visitors receive temporary identification badges, which include a personal photo. Upon exiting the building, visitors are required to return the temporary badge to the security desk.

While the process is similar in nature to the protocol previously in place, several security benefits are realized by digitalizing the process. These include providing school personnel with an immediate and up-to-date list of visitors in the building, which provides a greater level of visitor accountability in the event of an emergency.

The district's video surveillance system platform has also been updated. This system enhances the district's ability to monitor happenings occurring both internally and around the perimeter of the facilities while on and off campus, and to share information with law enforcement during emergency situations.

Committee Focuses on Student Engagement

The District Advisory Committee, which is comprised of educational professionals, parents, students and community members, provides an opportunity for collaboration in decision-making and shared responsibility for improvement districtwide. Throughout the year, these stakeholders collaborate in identifying educational issues, defining goals, formulating and implementing decisions, and evaluating the success of those decisions in helping students reach higher standards of excellence.

For the 2014-15 school year, the DAC, chaired by parent member Michael Nofi, will be focused on student engagement, as this topic has been identified as the key to addressing problems of low achievement, boredom, student misbehavior, alienation and dropout rates. To assess current levels and identify ways to increase engagement in the future, the committee will be administering a Student Engagement Survey during the first half of the school year.

In addition to focusing on student engagement, the DAC created a subcommittee, which has been charged with reviewing the action steps within the draft of the 2014-2019 Next S.T.E.P. strategic plan and making recommendations on the plan.

Becoming Global Change-Makers



A small cohort of Rocky Point High School students and staff members worked together to build bonds and learn the skills necessary to create a positive environment during this year's Challenge Day.

The powerful, high-energy program engaged more than 100 sophomores, juniors and select staff members in a series of experiential learning opportunities. With the help of program facilitators, individuals worked to increase personal power and self-esteem, shift dangerous peer pressure to positive peer support, and eliminate the acceptance of teasing and violence.

In the spirit of "pay it forward," participants were encouraged to share the knowledge they gained during the workshop and empower their peers and those in the community to stand united and make positive life choices.

This is the third year the school has coordinated the program. Students were selected to participate based on teacher and adult recommendation.



MAKING MUSIC WITH A MASTER

The musical talents of Rocky Point Middle School eighth-grader Bryant Liu and high school ninth-grader Allen Liu were recognized this fall when the brothers were selected to participate in the Lang Lang 101 Pianists Program at the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts.

During the event, 100 gifted young piano students from throughout New York State performed under the guidance of international concert pianist Lang Lang. The Liu brothers were selected for this honor through a rigorous application and audition process and were chosen from 200 applicants in New York State.

STAYING SAFE

In honor of Fire Prevention Month, Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School students received a refresher course on fire safety and prevention when members of the Rocky Point Fire Department visited the building.

During the visit, the firefighters spoke about

ROCKY POINT Round-Up

the type of gear they wear when entering a fire, the importance of smoke detectors, and having an escape plan in the case of an emergency. The students were active participants in the event, as the firefighters invited them to climb aboard an operational fire truck during the program.



STRENGTHENING MUSCLES, CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN

Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School students tested their locomotive, strength, agility and strategy skills by participating in the building's 13th annual "spooky gym" unit.

For the activity, the gym was transformed into a spooktacular activity center with 12 stations that each focused on a different athletic skill. Stations included a ghost-themed basketball hoop, hockey dribbling through a "graveyard" and a haunted house scooter trail.



COMMITTING TO Ivy League

Rocky Point High School senior Thomas Dutton has accrued a number of athletic accolades during his time in the district and recently added the title of future Ivy League scholar to his resume. The wrestling phenom will trade in his Eagle blues for Harvard University's crimson, as he has committed to continue his education and athletic career at the Division I institution this fall.

Of his decision, Thomas said, "I really felt at home when I toured the campus. It is a huge weight off my shoulders knowing that I have the next four years of my life planned out, and I look forward to starting in the fall."

Thomas, a member of the varsity wrestling team since the seventh grade, is a five-time league and All-County champion, a two-time All-State champion, the 2013 Suffolk County champion, a two-time All-American, and is currently ranked No. 9 in the country. With 218 wins under his belt, he is also on the way to beat the Long Island record of 227 wins.

"Thomas possesses the same drive on the mat as he does in school, which is a true testament to his family upbringing and personal commitment," said Rocky Point wrestling coach Darren Goldstein. "I am extremely proud of him and know he is going to be someone in the world."

In addition to his impressive wrestling career, Thomas is also an Advanced Placement student and a member of the school's Athletes Helping Athletes, Varsity Club and National Honor Society, as well as the New York State Math Honor Society. He plans to major in business management or economics while at Harvard.

"I am extremely proud of him and know he is going to be someone in the world."

- Rocky Point wrestling coach Darren Goldstein

Protecting the Health of Athletes

As part of its protocol to ensure student-athletes are physically fit enough to participate in sports, the district employs a comprehensive head injury awareness and safety program. For the past four years, the district has teamed up with the Concussion Management Program at St. Charles Hospital for its IMPACT Program.

This cognitive testing tool is used as a hospital-based approach to concussion management. It includes a 20-minute neurocognitive computer test given to athletes as a baseline before the sports season begins. If a concussion is suspected during the season, a follow-up test is administered to see if changes occurred since the baseline test. The comparison of test results provides physicians with important information on the athlete's cognitive status that will assist in the development of a treatment plan and ultimately a safe return to play.

This program is provided free of charge to Rocky Point athletes who participate in a contact/collision sport. On average, more than 500 students are tested each year.

Parents are also educated about the signs and symptoms to look for during the season's parent/athlete/coach meeting. All coaches take the CDC Heads Up online concussion course, and the district's athletic trainer is prepared with concussion checklists throughout the season.

"The most important message to get out to the parents and students is to be honest with their symptoms," said district Athletic Director Amy Agnesini. "Sometimes the athlete wants to return, so they are not truthful about what they are experiencing. If they are not honest, they put themselves at risk for second impact syndrome, which is basically getting a concussion on top of a concussion, a very serious situation."

Eagles Pride Soars

Homecoming 2014 was a day full of Eagle Pride for the entire Rocky Point community. As the varsity football team prepared to take on the Harborfields Tornados, students, faculty and community members gathered to enjoy the traditional homecoming parade along Rocky Point-Yaphank Road and a festival set up adjacent to the stadium. The event capped off with a win for the hometown team, as they dominated the big game 34-14.



District Mission Statement

The mission of the Rocky Point Union Free School District is to develop each child's full potential in a nurturing and supportive student-centered environment that will promote a foundation for lifelong learning.

www.rockypointschools.org



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Susan Y. Sullivan, *President*
Scott Reh, *Vice President*

Melissa Brown, *Trustee*

Sean P. Callahan, *Trustee*

John Lessler, *Trustee*

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Michael F. Ring