

EdTalk: December 24, 2021

Dr. David Leach, WVCSD Superintendent of Schools

Our holiday concerts this season certainly made for a magical time. I hope you had a chance to enjoy them. The excitement was palpable as students, teachers and parents experienced this joy.

The Warwick Valley Central School District is proud of its accomplished music program. It is one of the best in the area and is consistently named one of the “Best Communities for Music Education.” We are very well-represented every year in New York State School Music Association All-State and Orange County Music Educators’ Association All County bands, orchestras, and choirs.

Our music program is led by a team of 12 teachers – three at the High School, five at the Middle School, and four at the elementary schools. Our programs range from general education classroom instruction all the way to specialized orchestra, band, and chorus groups and clubs.

At the elementary level, we have general classroom instruction from kindergarten through fourth grade. In addition, we have third-grade and fourth-grade choruses, a fourth-grade orchestra, and a fourth-grade band.

In the Middle School we have individual grade-level (grades 5-8) orchestras, bands and choruses. For students not participating in one of these groups, we have grade-level general music classes. The Middle School also offers Ukulele Club as well as Honors Band and Orchestra, where wind instrument students and string instrument students perform together. Students also have the choice to participate in Wire Choir with High School students. The club emphasizes performing pop music.

The Middle School (grades 5-8) and High School also have the choice to participate in Wire Choir, another club offered with an emphasis on performing pop music.

Fifth-grade orchestra students who are interested in performing pop music at venues in and around Warwick, have the option to join Wire Choir. The Wire Choir – essentially a rock orchestra – includes students all the way up to 12th grade.

At the High School, we offer the Mixed Choir for freshmen; the Treble Choir for sopranos and altos; the Meistersingers, a college level group that includes sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses; and the Jazz Choir, one of only three high school jazz choirs in Orange County. The High School bands include Concert Band, Wind Ensemble, and Jazz Band and orchestra students have the opportunity to participate in Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, and the previously mentioned Wire Choir.

The High School also offers music classes, such as Advanced Placement Music Theory, for those seeking a very rigorous course in their music education. AP Music Theory is an in-depth

look at the components that make up the language of music. It is also a study of the manner in which those components interact in musical compositions. The study of theory includes many aspects of reading and performing music. These include harmony, rhythm, and listening skills (often called aural skills). We also provide our students with a course called Music In Our Lives, for students with no musical background as well as those with a musical background, and Music Production.

And, of course, students who are musically inclined may also enjoy our many drama club productions at the high school, middle school and elementary school levels as another way of expressing themselves through song and performance.

There are so many proven benefits to incorporating music into a student's education that will have a lifelong impact on learning.

In the classroom, students learn to be lifelong learners and appreciators of music at an early age. They sing, move to the music, keep a beat, and sometimes develop their own songs. They also play classroom instruments such as xylophones, metallophones, rhythm sticks, and floor drums.

Music helps develop language skills by stimulating the brain through sounds and lyrics, exposing them to vocabulary and oftentimes other languages. It also creates excellent memory skills. Melodies and sounds of songs have a way of staying with us. We all have experienced that. Music is a powerful tool to create memory skills.

Music also provides mental and social benefits for our students. Think of the teamwork and collaboration required for playing instruments or singing together, or the listening skills needed to adjust your volume and harmonize with the group. Students learn the value of working together. They learn to develop their voice and express themselves. They vocalize their thoughts in music.

Our students were experiencing a lot of personal growth and education as they prepared for and performed during these holiday concerts. I am so proud of all of them and of our music teachers who provided these impactful educational experiences.