

EdTalk: September 24, 2021

Dr. David Leach, WVCSD Superintendent of Schools

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment all work together to create a learning cycle that is complementary. Learning standards and anticipated student outcomes serve as the organizing structure for the curriculum. It's all about "what" we want the child to understand. The teacher then provides students with instruction in order to assist them in mastering the learning objectives. This is "how" pupils learn content and develop a long-term grasp of it. We must also acknowledge the importance of classroom assessment. It is one of the three important parts of the teaching and learning cycle, together with curriculum and instruction.

Assessment has come under fire in recent years for the amount of time it takes in the classroom, the stress it causes students, and the fact that high-stakes tests are a moving target due to changing state curriculum standards. However, most criticism focuses on the high-stakes standardized exams, which we all agree is not the most important measure.

The teacher assesses the learners to see if we were successful. While student outcomes have implications for individual students, the primary goal is to provide feedback to the teacher. Assessments improve instruction during each lesson. Assessments keep educators and students focused on where they're going. Assessments shift the instructional conversation in schools to student learning results. If the learning results aren't what the teacher had hoped for, the teacher modifies the lesson plan to get better results. Similarly, assessment data may suggest a curricular gap that requires revision.

Let's use assessments to make sure that all students have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to succeed outside of the classroom. When confronted with a challenging problem, educated citizens can sit down and declare, "I can accomplish this."

The following are some of the highlights from our schools in the past week:

Pine Island Elementary School

Kindergarten teachers continue to work with their students to help them develop their vocabulary. Our teachers applaud and reinforce students' use of new and interesting words. They reaffirm the students' knowledge of word definitions. Teachers help students connect words to their personal experiences. These techniques engage students, make them feel valued and recognized, foster relationships, and increase their enthusiasm for learning new words.

Mrs. Mezzetti's class is learning to identify and count numbers to 5 using counters. Students also practiced making various shapes using tangram puzzles. Tangram puzzles reinforce the following skills: classifying shapes, using fine motor and visual perceptual skills, and learning new vocabulary such as rotate and flip.

Ms. White and Ms. Lordy's classes took advantage of the nice weather in our alphabet circle.

Students had to identify each letter's name as they landed on a circle. Many students could even say the letter sound.

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue is proud to share that our orchestra and band have resumed their lessons after the break caused by the pandemic. Our orchestra teacher, Keely Blaikner, shared that there is so much excitement on behalf of our students as they have been "meeting" their instruments for the first time and taking them home to practice. Our students have learned their first song and will be focusing on establishing proper instrument holding/posture positions. Ryan Muehlbauer's band students are learning to assemble their instruments and make their first sounds. Students are focusing on learning new terminology such as "rehearsal, embouchure, and velocity."

Sanfordville Elementary School

These second-graders have been busy launching their reading and writing workshop units. Students have enjoyed choosing "just-right books" and are starting to work on building their reading stamina during independent reading time. Students have created wonderful heart maps to draw inspiration from during our writer's workshop time. Every student got to share their heart maps with the class.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Tia Thomson's fifth-graders are learning the design process. They were charged with the task of building a freestanding structure out of uncooked spaghetti string and tape that can hold a marshmallow. Our scholars had 17 minutes to design and build their structures. After reflecting on their designs, they were provided with an opportunity to adjust and make improvements to their models. These scholars are developing their problem-solving, communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills.

Patrick Ellis' Design and Modeling students created "hovercrafts" out of a piece of paper. The students tested their designs by propelling them off of a rubber band launch. This eighth-grade class allows students to expand on the design process that they explored in fifth grade.

Warwick Valley High School

Charles Sommerlad, the high school's new business teacher, has hit the ground running in his Introduction to Marketing classes. Students were tasked with creating their own franchise and developing slogans for their business. The kids are employing their creative minds to come up with a unique business model and a catchy jingle or catchphrase to promote their ideas.