

WVCSD EdTalk: April 27, 2022
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

The way our faculty teaches and how our students learn world languages has been transitioning from a focus on content knowledge to one that emphasizes application and contextual understanding. This evolution is similar to changes made by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to learning standards in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

New York adopted the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards three years ago. Here in Warwick, we have actually been applying these standards for much longer than the state, having provided our faculty with extensive professional development. One critical difference in our approach has been that during class our teachers stay in the target language 80% of the time.

This more immersive approach, which also relies heavily on contextual clues and conversation, is applied to classes in all three of the languages we offer: French, Spanish, and Mandarin. Throughout the five-year sequence—which begins in middle school in seventh grade—our language program teaches fluency through a communicative approach that uses the five standards for world language learning:

- Communication
- Cultures
- Connections
- Comparisons
- Communities

Through this approach, students gain deeper insights into the cultures represented in each language, affording them a deeper appreciation of the people, history, and geography that does not come from rote learning of nouns or verb conjugation.

The district is also proud to have been a founding district of the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB). Students can earn the NYSSB and have it added to their diploma if they meet certain criteria, including passing the ACTFL Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages exam.

The district recently learned that more than 120 students have qualified for the NYSSB this year!

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Pine Island Elementary School

Pine Island teachers participated in an afternoon of professional development in math with Mr. Larry Lueck from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. During the session, Mr. Lueck worked with a group of kindergartners to demonstrate a lesson focused on teen numbers through 19. The students worked on counting, writing, and grouping skills. Mr. Lueck shared instructional strategies that

the teachers could use with students who required additional examples or practice to reinforce their counting skills. It was a very productive afternoon. The students enjoyed "teaching" their teachers, and the teachers enjoyed "learning" from them.

Park Avenue Elementary School

Second grade students at Park Avenue got a virtual Q & A visit from New York Times Best Selling Author Tracey West. Beforehand, students spent time in the Media Center learning about the author and preparing relevant questions to ask her. Tracey has been writing for many years and has created incredible stories for popular franchises like Star Wars and Pokemon. She is most famous for her original series, Dragon Masters. The students enjoyed having their questions answered and hearing Tracey talk about what inspires her, and her experiences as a writer.

Our before-school art club dove headfirst into their first project inspired by Peter Anton. Anton is a renowned artist and sculptor, best known for his larger-than-life boxed chocolates, ice cream bars, and other confections. Students discussed the attributes of different sculptures, what materials are used to make them, and the importance of an armature (the foundation of a sculpture), before creating their own decadent donut sculptures. Club members created a foil armature, added a few layers of plaster strips, and then decorated their donuts with paint. They looked good enough to eat!

Sanfordville Elementary School

Mrs. Besimer has been challenging her fourth grade students in STEM. The students are finishing up group research on energy types: light, heat, mechanical, and sound. The groups worked together to create Google Slides that explained what their energy was, where it came from, and why it was important. While each group presented its energy slide to their class, students were jotting down important information about each energy type into their Google Slides.

Ms. Carter's PIE 1/2 class celebrated the end of their integrated science, social studies, ELA, and math unit about the habitats of living things. Students researched various habitats using nonfiction texts and online resources. They collaborated with a partner to document important information, create their own anchor chart posters, design and build a diorama, and present their findings to parents and visitors at their class science fair, held at the outdoor classroom.

Warwick Valley Middle School

The Middle School and High School hosted a Community Forum along with the Warwick Prevention Coalition focused on cannabis and the new laws around the legality of cannabis products. Parents and community members gathered to learn about the new forms cannabis can be found in. Local experts shared the potential for overdose when ingesting cannabis, as well as the drug's accessibility to children. Thank you, to the Prevention Coalition for assisting in sharing this information and working with our school district to inform our community.

Warwick Valley High School

The 7th Annual Career Day was a hit. Ms. Mary Fox and Mr. Stephen Sweeney organized the event, at which more than thirty vendors represented local businesses, health care providers, branches of the armed forces, and local emergency service organizations. The event was sponsored by the Warwick Valley Chamber of Commerce and ShopRite of Warwick. Students were excited to meet the representatives of the careers that they were interested in learning about. They engaged in conversations and had their questions answered. Many walked away with a better understanding of specific careers and what they needed to do after high school to enter those fields. The event went well and was a sign of how much the local community cares about our students and school.