

WVCSD EdTalk: November 16, 2022
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

I recently completed the NYS 6-hour defensive driving course. Even though my motive for enrolling in the course was to reduce my auto insurance costs, it provided valuable lessons about safe driving and techniques to avoid accidents. The number of helpful reminders packed into the section about school buses really stood out to me.

For example, how should drivers behave when they encounter a school bus or emergency vehicle on the road? Whether approaching the school bus from the front or behind, drivers should always reduce speed and pay attention to signals. The law clearly states that passing a stopped school bus is prohibited and extremely dangerous when its red lights are flashing. Those lights indicate that the bus is going to stop and that it is picking up or dropping off students. Drivers must come to a complete stop until all children have gotten on or off the bus and the flashing stop sign has been drawn in.

You must always stop at flashing red lights, even on divided and multilane highways and school grounds. As with every law intended to protect us, there are repercussions for poor driving judgment and those who defy these laws; they are steep and can include jail time. The initial penalty for improperly passing a school bus is a \$250 fine, five points on your license, and/or 30 days in prison. Worse, you might have to spend the rest of your life bearing the guilt of having caused the harm or death of a child.

Please, as we all share the road with school buses; remember that they carry our most precious cargo.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue hosted its annual Veterans Day celebration, organized and presented by the Student Council, led by advisors Amy Buliung and Theresa Canfield. Students were encouraged to invite a veteran to the event. In addition to our military guests, the entire student body, faculty, and staff were in attendance, along with Assistant Superintendent Meghan McGourty, Board of Education President Keith Parsons, and me. Students were able to sit with their special guests during the ceremony, which included the presentation of colors by a detail from Marine Air Group 49, a performance of our national anthem by the WVHS Meistersingers, music from the Wire Choir, led by Elissa Maynard, and other musical performances by Park Avenue students, led by music teacher Katlyn Chester. Many veterans attended and were honored during a roll call. The event ended with a beautiful reception with our guests in the cafeteria. Students expressed their delight at the opportunity to spend time with the veterans. Thank you to all parent volunteers and our PTA for making this event a huge success!

Sanfordville Elementary School

First-grade classes worked together on a thank-you note to the Warwick firefighters for their recent visit to Sanfordville. Students stated what they had learned during the visit, discussed their favorite parts of the demonstration, and thanked them for the gifts they brought. Additionally, each student chose a picture to color for the men and women of the firehouse. Firefighter Mike Contaxis came to their classrooms to receive the notes and pictures, thanked the students, and said he would hang them in the firehouse for all to see.

Kindergarten students think like structural engineers in STEM classes by exploring three types of bridges. They are sketching, planning and choosing materials to construct their bridge platform, which they will build and test. During these activities, students work on the 4Cs to solve a challenge (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity). The students also used the engineering design process to solve problems in each lesson. First-grade students think like environmental engineers, creating a plan for their hand pollinators. The students tested materials two weeks ago to see which ones could pick up and transfer pollen and which could not. They are creating sketches and choosing materials for their builds and will develop and test their hand pollinators soon.

Warwick Valley Middle School

The modified sports teams were excited to have their preseason meetings this week. Students in seventh and eighth grades are encouraged to participate in a sport each season. The winter season offers wrestling, boys' and girls' basketball, and cheerleading. The students also have the opportunity to "test up" to compete on junior and varsity teams.

We are looking forward to a great Wildcats winter!

Warwick Valley High School

Local veterans were invited into history classes last week to share their experiences serving the country in the United States military. The veterans talked about their roles, including helicopter pilots, clerks, combat units, and medical support. They also shared how their experiences opened doors to new career paths when they returned home. Students had the excellent opportunity to question the veterans. Many were interested to know what kind of impact their time in the service had on their families and relationships. Students also asked about a soldier's frame of mind while in active service. It was an excellent experience for the students and the veterans, who enjoyed connecting in a personal, intimate setting. Thank you to all our veterans!