

**WVCSD EdTalk: December 28, 2022**  
**Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools**

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December is a wonderful time of the school year. Our bands, orchestras and choirs filled our auditoriums with musical cheer for the holidays during our winter concerts. When you are there, you feel the holiday spirit. I hope you had the opportunity to spend some time with us this season. Our students, teachers and parents made special memories that will last a lifetime!

The Warwick Valley High School Orchestra Winter Concert marked the official start of the winter concert season in early December. Two days later the High School's Mixed Choir, Jazz Choir, Treble Choir, Meistersingers, Mistersingers and the WVMS Honors Choir presented their "Home for the Holidays" choral concert. The next week, the WVHS Music Department presented its annual Winter Band Concert, featuring performances by the Jazz Ensemble, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble. And, this past week, the Middle School held its Grades 5 & 6 Winter Concert and its Grades 7 & 8 Winter Concert.

The Warwick Valley Central School District is proud to have such an accomplished music program – one of the very best in the area. Warwick is consistently named one of the "Best Communities for Music Education." What makes our music program so special is the teaching skills, care and attention our teachers give to our students. Teachers at each level – high school, middle school and elementary school – were helping out at each concert. Their love for the program and our students is unparalleled.

Our district is very well-represented every year with students placed in New York State School Music Association All-State and Orange County Music Educators' Association All County bands, orchestras, and choirs.

Our music program offers general education classroom instruction all the way up 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 Wire Choir, where they can participate with high school students, and Ukelele Club.

At the High School, we offer the Mixed Choir for freshmen; the Treble Choir for sopranos and altos; the Meistersingers, a select ensemble 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 Wire Choir. We also offer a host of music education courses that include theory and 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. Research shows that playing an instrument changes the shape and power of the brain and has the potential to improve a person's cognitive skills, and there is mounting evidence that musicians have organizationally and functionally different brains compared to non-musicians. Music helps develop language skills by stimulating the brain through sounds and lyrics, exposing them to vocabulary and oftentimes other languages. It creates excellent memory skills. And, music provides social benefits as well.

Our program attracts more than 1,700 students in grades 4 through 12 and I am so proud of each of them!

*Here are some highlights from our schools this week:*

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Recently, several activities and events took place to usher in the holiday season and to bring some cheer to our young students. Some of these included:

Students in the fourth-grade band performed "Jingle Bells" for various classrooms throughout Park Avenue. The students were eager yet nervous to perform for their peers, so they worked on multiple strategies to combat "stage fright." One of the key takeaways from their performances was that "practice leads to confidence." The students found the more they prepared with at-home practice routines, the more confident they were for the performances. Thank you to all the classroom teachers who shared their time with the band and allowed the students this performance opportunity!

The kindergarten classes celebrated "Grinch Day" with many different fun activities! Students brainstormed and shared various ideas to help the Grinch's heart grow three sizes. Each student placed their expanded heart on a board alongside a visual representation of the Grinch. Students also participated in other Grinch-themed classroom activities, such as a "Grinch Heart Balloon Science Experiment," which called for students to observe a balloon being inflated by a water bottle, vinegar, and baking soda!

The Middle School Honors Symphony Orchestra visited Park Avenue. These remarkable musicians broke up into various smaller groups and visited our classrooms to play holiday music for our students. Our students were so surprised and excited when they showed up.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Kindergarten classes invited parents and families in for their Winter Holiday Concert. Students sang holiday songs for their guests, displayed holiday decorations they created, and enjoyed a cookie party with their friends and families.

Carla Overbey's class was busy again celebrating the holiday. Students invited teachers, staff, and the principal to their cookie party. Students collaborated with classmates to choose the cookies they would make, create grocery lists, follow recipes, mix the ingredients, allow the adults to bake the cookies, decorate the classroom, prepare for visitors, and then host guests for their celebration.

Vardine Janvier's class invited parents into the classroom for a winter celebration. The celebration began with students singing and acting out the song "Frosty the Snowman." The performance was followed by students decorating cookies and making snowman crafts with their families.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Our band, orchestra, and chorus students were required to attend classes regularly and music lessons to prepare for the winter concerts. We often find students in the band room rehearsing during their lunch periods. Our students have such commitment!

Scientists in the fifth grade finished a unit on the properties of matter. It culminated in a scientific investigation called *What's in the Bag?* Students investigated whether mixing two substances in a closed system would result in a new substance with different properties. They identified how/if particle size would affect the rate of reaction and were required to analyze and interpret the data they collected and construct an explanation of the observed phenomenon.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

The last pieces of machinery have been installed, and the newly renovated and expanded technology suite is complete! The incredible enhancements allow the school to offer more diverse technology and engineering electives at all grade levels. The second classroom/computer lab and four workstations give students more hands-on experiences in robotics, engineering, and technology courses. Students can test their robots' responses to programmed commands in the robotics arena, and they can build an electric car in another space designated for our Green Technology course.

The new equipment includes a lathe that communicates with Autodesk Fusion software and a milling machine that develops three-dimensional objects and surface cuts by vertical and horizontal incisions. These cutting-edge technologies stand alongside traditional ones, like a new miter saw, drill press, band saw, and belt sander. A newly designated room for the school's 3-D printers completes the suite.