

WVCSD EdTalk: February 22, 2023
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

Drug abuse among America's youth is a heartbreaking issue that deserves our attention. Our community must come together and work toward a solution. Neither students nor their families can afford to turn a blind eye to the devastation that drugs can cause.

The 2020-21 Pride Survey given to our own students shows us that usage of drugs grows as students get older:

- Students who used alcohol in the last 30 days: Eighth-graders, 9%; 10th-graders, 21%; and 12th-graders, 34%
- Students who used marijuana in the last 30 days: Eighth-graders, 1.5%; 10th-graders, 10%; and 12th-graders, 23%
- Students who used E-cigarettes in the last 30 days: Eighth-graders, 6%; 10th-graders, 9%; and 12th-graders, 20.5%

A presentation titled "Drug & Alcohol Awareness & Prevention" was given at the August 4th Board of Education meeting. As well as introducing new plans for the upcoming school year, the presentation highlighted the various drug and alcohol prevention programs and resources the district currently uses.

The district's drug awareness and prevention plan includes utilizing School Resource Officers (SROs), providing regular professional development for faculty and staff, having crisis teams in each school, educating students through health classes, monitoring technology for drug-related activities, conducting breathalyzer checks, having an anonymous tip line, partnering with the Warwick Valley Community Center to form a prevention coalition, hosting an annual marijuana forum, providing a mock bedroom search for parents, participating in Red Ribbon Week, having a SADD club, educating students about responsible driving, and conducting a pride survey. The district is also planning to provide educator training, resume canine searches, incorporate a DARE program, offer a substance-free pledge, have quarterly assemblies, and involve student coalition representatives in peer-to-peer recruitment. To learn more about each approach, check out our website.

We have a responsibility to educate our youth about the dangers of drugs as parents, educators, and fellow students. Those struggling with substance abuse need a safe and supportive environment where they can seek help and receive the resources they need to overcome their addictions.

In a recent article published by The Learning Network of The New York Times, "How Teens Think Adults Should Talk About Drugs: Insights from The Learning Network, December 1,

2022,” the author examines the opinions of teenagers about drug use and what adults should do to address them.

A high school student featured in the article, Albert, suggests that parents talk to their children about drugs in order to prevent them from falling into substance abuse. In Albert's words, "The best time to confront your kid about drugs is when you're ready, or when they're becoming teenagers or changing, like from cute to mature and stupid."

Albert suggests building a rapport with your teen first in order to have an effective conversation. He says, "First, greet your kid and hang out, because your kid will go along with you. Before you straight up talk about drugs, because that'll destroy the immersion, start slowly, introduce and present the idea of being a teenager."

After establishing a good rapport, it's time to start discussing drugs with your child. Albert recommends educating your child about why people use drugs, the consequences of drug use, both physically, mentally, and emotionally, and emphasizing that "drugs doesn't make you cool, but it makes you look stupid."

To prevent drug abuse, Albert suggests mentioning the importance of participating in sports or clubs, being with friends who bring positive influence, and finding a hobby. As Albert shares, parents can "... suggest some things to do to prevent it, like mention about having sports and clubs, be with friends who are kind and bring good influence, or having a hobby."

Albert suggests that you talk to your child about drugs and educate them about the dangers of substance abuse. In this way, they can make informed decisions and avoid the negative consequences that can be caused by drug use.

Smart kid.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

The Park Avenue PTA hosted a BINGO Night as a give-back to our very special Park Avenue community. We owe a very special thanks to chairpeople Kelli Monti, Falon Melvin and Christine McKnight for their hard work in making this amazing event. Corey Brown returned as the official BINGO caller and was an awesome caller, working the crowd with jokes and randomly leading the group in singing a special rendition of Happy Birthday dedicated to summer babies. We are so grateful for our PTA and our Park Avenue community!

Diane Kilbride's third-grade class met with Lorie Ingber's kindergarten class to create a "Love Monster" out of paper bags and other paper products. First, the kindergarteners read the book *Love Monster* by Rachel Bright and began working on a craft based on the story. The third-grade class

joined to assist the kindergarten class with their project. Both kindergartners and third-graders shared stories about themselves while they worked. The Kinder-buddies program provides third-graders with an opportunity to model Portrait of a Graduate attributes such as good citizenship for our kindergarten classes. Both teachers noted how students in their classes enjoy the program and how well the third-graders work with the kindergartners.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville spread lots of love over the past week! Thank you to all the students and staff who created Valentine's Day greetings for our veterans to thank them for their service. We collected hundreds of cards, letters and pictures. We were able to send one big box to Senator Skoufis' Office and one big box to Congressman Ryan's Office. They were shared with veterans around our region. Such a nice way to let our veterans know our school community cares for and respects them all!

In honor of National School Resource Officer (SRO) Appreciation Day, the students and staff at Sanfordville Elementary School thanked Officer Katie and Officer Dave for all they do. They serve as mentors, build positive relationships with students, and always keep the school safe.

The PTA surprised the bus drivers on Bus Driver Appreciation Day with a box with water, chocolate, chips, and a sweet thank you note, as they dropped off their students at school that morning.

In celebration of Random Acts of Kindness Day, fourth-graders committed intentional acts of kindness, they wrote their acts on hearts that filled the entrance to the fourth-grade hallway at Sanfordville. They also traveled around the building surprising some of the staff with kind acts.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Warwick Valley Middle School celebrated Random Acts of Kindness Day in a big way. The student senate led the charge, challenging all of the middle school students to share a random act of kindness they performed recently. During the lunch periods, students were encouraged to write their Act of Kindness on hearts that are lining the halls of the middle school. Each morning this week, our student senate members shouted out students and the Random Acts of Kindness they completed. It has been exciting to see our students share the positive little things they do to make the world a better place.

In honor of Valentine's for Veterans, the middle school invited some of our local veterans into the building to share their experiences with our students. We were honored to host Everest Lamay, Don Grenier, Stan Martin, Tony Cosimano and Tom Brennan throughout the week. Our veterans shared their experiences from the Korean and Vietnam wars. We are very grateful for our veterans and are looking forward to hosting our Memorial Day Breakfast for them in May.

Warwick Valley High School

In recent weeks at Warwick Valley High School, students have been connecting their creativity, writing and acting skills to create short plays and skits both in and out of the classroom setting. Danielle DeBella's Creative Writing class is learning about the importance of words and how the use of different words can help convey meaning and emotion. Students demonstrate this by working in pairs to create a short play in which the protagonist wants something and another character gets in the way. Students are also asked to include a symbol in their play that they would then give meaning to using words. Students were engaged in the activity and working diligently to create a script to be performed at the end of the week.