

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

The New York State school aid program is an essential revenue stream for school districts to provide services to students while easing the fiscal burden on local taxpayers. As a result, we closely monitor the process.

Last week, the Legislature's two chambers unveiled their respective one-house budget proposals and resolutions, which represent the concluding elements of the annual budget process before a final agreement is reached. Subsequently, negotiations among the Executive, Assembly, and Senate intensify.

Both legislative branches align with the Governor's proposals to completely fund Foundation Aid and finance expense-based and other aids in accordance with existing law. They also oppose freezing data employed in aid calculations and reject the Governor's High-Impact Tutoring Set-Aside proposition. Both chambers support increased funding for Universal Prekindergarten, Career and Technical Education, and universal free student meals. Furthermore, both reject charter school expansion proposals.

Neither chamber proposes an increase to the 3% minimum Foundation Aid increment, whether uniformly or scaled based on district wealth or other factors.

As both the Assembly and Senate have rejected the Governor's significant housing and bail reform proposals, the final resolution of the state budget is expected to be contentious. Furthermore, both chambers have proposed increasing taxes on New York's higher-earning citizens, a proposition the Governor rejected from the start.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

In art class, second and fourth-grade students are creating their mythical creatures by combining different animals, naming them, and giving them powers. This project incorporates multiple phases, including researching and designing their fantasy creatures on sketch paper, experimenting with chalk pastels and blending techniques, and creating antique-looking paper using brown liquid watercolor that their creature cards will be adhered to. Lastly, the students will articulate their creatures by naming them, listing their powers, and describing their habitat, which will be listed on the antiqued paper.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Fourth-grade students worked with Media Specialist Danielle Cancel to design and build a moving invention using the Rig-A-Ma-Jig materials. Each group member learned while leading, collaborating, problem-solving, creating, and innovating. The groups created a rocket ship with a pulley system that would lift a chair to the top of the ship so an astronaut could enter, an actual moving car, a unicorn, and a bus.

Traveling Trunks from the Warwick Historical Society visited our third-grade classes to present their popular interactive lesson, "Barn Raising: Men's Work on the Farm." Historical society member John Johansen taught students how barns were built during the 1800s, why barns are painted red, how they moved a barn five miles in Warwick, and more.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Despite the snow, the Middle School has begun preparing to welcome current fourth-graders. At a recent incoming student/parent night, Principal Georgianna Diopoulos introduced Secondary Associate Principals Christopher Radon and Jared Yapkowitz, who spoke about the daily schedule, clubs, and lunches. School guidance counselors were available to answer questions, and the Wildcat Ambassadors were there to share their middle school experiences.

The night's highlight was a question and answer period directed toward our student panel. The panel shared the one thing that occurred in middle school that they wished they had been more prepared for. One Wildcat Ambassador shared that she was not prepared for the changes in her friend group. When navigating middle school, it is important to understand that your interests change as you grow, and friends you once had a lot in common with may also change. Parents appreciated the better understanding of the middle school years. Following the panel, Ambassadors took parents on guided tours of the building. We are grateful to all the parents who attended and our Wildcat Ambassadors for volunteering their time.

Warwick Valley High School

The recent snow storms have not deterred the Drama Club from putting in long hours of practice to perfect scenes for the spring musical Xanadu. Director Nick DiLeo and co-producers Ruth Trovato and Donna Nestor are responsible for choosing the play, casting, coaching, and coordinating all facets of the play, including music, dance, lighting, sound, and sets. Lighting is handled by students Bee Nowak, Brendan Tenant, Denary Simon, and adult volunteers Al Ridella and Joe Trovato. Student Sound Technicians Jojo Gagliano and Caden Parsons coordinate sound from the actors and the musicians.

Music teachers Noreen Hanson and Megan Shafer work together as voice and music directors, teaching the students the nuances of performing with live music. Art teacher Rocco Manno and his set design class create the realistic backdrop and props that correspond to each scene in the play. This year, the students and Mr. Manno built a massive pegasus! The dancing, choreographed by Beth Maisonet, and decorative costumes, handcrafted by Nina Galitzine and Amy Buliung, help bring the show to life. With all of this hard work and effort by the spring musical team, the performances are sure to entertain and impress everyone who comes out to see Xanadu. We are all excited to see the musical. Break a leg, Drama Club!