

WVCSD EdTalk: April 19, 2023
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

Warwick had four teams advance to the NYS Odyssey of the Mind competition (OM). The teams represented Warwick well at the competition and were praised for their outstanding performances. The students' and coaches' efforts paid off, as three teams earned the opportunity to compete in the prestigious Worlds Finals. Warwick Valley Middle School placed first and second, with Warwick Valley High School placing third, each advancing to Worlds. Michigan State will host a competition where Warwick teams will face teams from around the globe. We wish the teams good luck in the upcoming competition and commend them for their outstanding talent and hard work.

A major aim of the Odyssey of the Mind program is to help students develop and use their natural creativity so that they can become better problem-solvers. If you were faced with a problem that needed an original solution, what would you do? The prospect can be frightening for us adults, let alone students. However, OM members learn not to be afraid of solving problems. We believe that all facets of their lives will benefit from these skills and self-confidence. OM allows students to apply their learning through open-ended problems they solve based on their interests and passions. As well as teamwork, budgeting, time management, public speaking, and so much more, OM emphasizes a wide range of skills. Students at all levels will be able to grow as individuals, grow as team members, and achieve their full potential as a result of participating in this international program.

The following examples will give you a better sense of the OM problems student tackle, two from previous years: "Escape vroOM" and "Odyssey ReOMvention."

In the "Escape vroOM" challenge, students were asked to create a performance that included team-built vehicles that would assist their characters in escaping an unusual room. To meet this challenge, students had to work collaboratively and combine their creative skills to build a vehicle that could transport them to safety. It was a unique opportunity to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills among students.

As part of another challenge, "Odyssey ReOMvention," students were asked to present a performance identifying an original threat to the environment that replicates until a team-created technical reOMvention eradicates the threat. Baking soda, original music, and two animal characters were needed for the performance. Students were able to apply their scientific knowledge by identifying a problem and creating a technical solution while incorporating the arts through music and performance.

Congratulations to all the students, coaches and families who participated in this wonderful program.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School:

Kindergarten students from Park Avenue Elementary School recently took a spring nature walk to observe the changes that are unfolding in their environment. During their exploration, students used magnifying glasses to examine the flora around them, including apple blossoms, hyacinth flowers, daffodil buds, and other plants. Following the nature walk, students returned to the classroom to document their observations.

As part of the Agriculture Literacy Week 2023 celebration, first-grade students are participating in an Agriculture Literature Program led by a Cornell Cooperative master gardener. The program aims to highlight the connection between food and culture and foster intergenerational connections. During the program, students listened to the story *Tomatoes for Neela* by Padma Lakshmi, and then the master gardener demonstrated how to plant seeds.

Donna Berghahn's first-grade class set up an incubator in their classroom and placed 11 eggs inside to observe and care for during the incubation period. The students have been busy predicting how many eggs will hatch and will maintain journals to monitor the humidity levels and temperature inside the incubator throughout the process. The class is grateful for Kristen Baumann's help each year with this fun and exciting learning opportunity. The students eagerly anticipate hatching day every year!

Sanfordville Elementary School:

More than 40 acts took the stage to perform for friends and families during the Sanfordville PTA Talent Show. Students in grades K-4 impressed the audience with their singing, dancing, flipping, joking, magic tricks, poetry recitation, and musical performances on instruments such as the drums, saxophone, flute, and piano. The PTA and the Cirbus Family deserve special thanks for their planning and hard work, which ensured a fun night for all!

The students and staff at Sanfordville Elementary School wore red to show support for autism acceptance. Autism signs and balloons decorated the school's hallways. Several classes read the book *Uniquely Wired: A Story About Autism and Its Gifts* by Julia Cook, which follows the story of Zak, a boy with autism. Through Zak's perspective, readers learned about how he responds to the world around him in unique ways. The book taught valuable lessons about patience, tolerance, and understanding. The classes also came together to take a photo in the shape of the infinity sign, symbolizing the "diversity with infinite variations and infinite possibilities" for students with autism.

Warwick Valley Middle School:

Fifth and sixth-grade students from Warwick Valley Middle School recently participated in the Annual Arbor Day Poster Contest, sponsored by the Warwick Tree Commission. The posters are displayed at Town Hall during the month of April. This year, several students from Warwick Valley Middle School were recognized for their posters, including Sophia Young, who won the 1st Place Overall Award, Leah Scalo, who won the 2nd Place Overall Award, and Zoe Fong, who won the 3rd Place Overall Award. Ella Stazzone won the Best Theme Award, and Mikayla Ramirez-Rivera received the Special Mention Award.

The students will celebrate their accomplishment at the Warwick's Annual Arbor Day Ceremony at the end of the month.

Warwick Valley High School:

Juliana Woods, a student at Warwick Valley High School, recently received an American Visions Award for her painting titled "Buy One, Get One Free" from the nonprofit Alliance of Young Artists and Writers. Her piece was exhibited at the Trolley Barn Gallery, and she will be honored for her amazing work at Carnegie Hall in June.

Adella Kurosz and Lionel Wolfe were honored at the annual Orange-Ulster BOCES Humanities Breakfast for their outstanding work in the visual and performing arts during their high school careers.

Adella, who will be attending SUNY New Paltz this fall to study art education, is actively involved in the youth and music scene in Warwick through the Doc Fry Community Center. She organizes local bands and showcases upcoming artists at the center's pop-up gallery and has completed over 100 hours of community service to provide the town with a culturally enriched experience. Adella's talent has been recognized throughout the community, and her artwork has been featured in multiple shows within Orange County. Last year, her portrait was featured in the Albert Wisner Library and the Lower Hudson Digital Media Art Show. This year, her portrait collage was selected to be displayed at the Youth With Exceptional Promise Art Show at the Galleria Mall.

Lionel Wolfe, who plans to study engineering at a four-year university this fall, is actively involved in the music department, playing piano and saxophone in band and jazz band and singing Bass 2 in the Meistersingers. He is also a main accompanist. Lionel has won several awards for his singing and piano playing at music festivals and had the honor of being chosen as one of 22 Bass 2 singers in the National Choir, performing in Washington DC.