

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Our elementary school LEGO League teams recently wrapped up their final builds, gave presentations to their principals, teachers, and school staff, and answered their questions.

LEGO League introduces science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to children through fun and exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experience through a guided, global robotics program designed to inspire youth to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills in a series of three challenges.

Since mid-November, the teams from Park Avenue and Sanfordville Elementary School have been meeting before or after school with their instructional technology teachers Amanda Cangialosi at Park Avenue, and Casey Besimer and Brittini Aberasturi at Sanfordville to work on this season's LEGO challenges.

The teams started the season by using LEGO to build a way to collect energy with a wind turbine, a way to store energy in an energy storage facility, as well as a way to use the energy by building a carousel ride. Then, they conducted research to find other producers and consumers of natural energy sources.

At Park Avenue, Ms. Cangialosi's students decided to build a solar panel field, an additional energy storage facility, and a pirate ship ride. After building all the components, students broke out into pairs to program three different parts—the spinning wind turbine, a house that lights up, and the pirate ship.

At Sanfordville, the students of Ms. Besimer and Ms. Aberasturi collaborated on two solar-powered cars that were coded to drive, a Ferris wheel that was powered by a wind turbine, and a water wheel that controlled a hydraulic dam gate, which was used to power a grocery store. The store had a closed circuit with a light inside.

The final task for the teams was to collaborate on a presentation of their build, share that presentation with a select audience – including administrators – and prepare for a question and answer session.

By participating in LEGO League, students gain an understanding of the basics of STEM and apply their skills while having fun building habits of learning, confidence, and teamwork along the way. Beyond the obvious academic and team-building benefits, the coaches report that the students also bonded well together throughout the challenge.

Furthermore, this type of learning helps our students accomplish meeting the goals of the district's Portrait of a Graduate. The LEGO program's core values are Discovery (exploring new skills and ideas); Innovation (using creativity and persistence to solve problems); Impact (applying what is learned to improve the world); Inclusion (respecting each other and embracing differences); teamwork (gaining strength when working together). It is easy to see the parallels between these and the attributes of our Portrait of a Graduate: Collaborator; Communicator; Creator/Innovator; Ethical and Global Citizen; Resilient Individual; Problem Solver; and Life-long Learner.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Heather Roecker, Coordinator of Health and Attendance, accompanied Assistant Superintendents Cindy Leandro and Meghan McGourty on a visit to Theresa Canfield's kindergarten and Mrs. Campora's first grade classrooms. They came to discuss Women's History Month and pioneer women of wellness. Some of the women discussed were:

- Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross.
- Florence Nightingale, who is celebrated on International Nurses Day, which falls on her birthday, May 12.
- Elizabeth Blackwell, who founded a hospital in New York City (New York Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital) and a medical college that taught patients and their families about the importance of cleanliness, fresh air, and healthy foods.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Members of the Warwick Rotary Club visited both elementary schools to teach students about the mission of the Rotary Club. The Rotarians gifted the fourth-graders with dictionaries to help them prepare for the upcoming Spelling Bee, which is sponsored by the club. Their generosity continued as our Kindergartners learned about water safety and received the book "Josh the Baby Otter" to take home and read with their families. Thank you again to our local Rotary Club!

Sanfordville band students joined with Park Avenue students to impress everyone at the combined band concert. The Elementary Band performed "We Are the Wildcats" and the "March of the Rookies". After performing, the students were able to share the floor with each of the Middle School grade-level bands, the High School Jazz Band, High School Concert Band, and High School Honors Wind Ensemble. This is such an amazing way to see the growth and talent of our musicians.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Every month, teachers at the Middle School nominate students to receive the Student of the Month award, recognizing them for demonstrating the characteristics described in the school district's Portrait of a Graduate. During the months of January and February, we celebrated a total of 62 students who were nominated for their excellent collaboration and communication skills in group projects, as well as their resilience in tackling new challenges with confidence. To honor these students of the month, families are invited to a celebratory breakfast where the students are recognized for their achievements.

Warwick Valley High School

The WVHS Orange County Academic League (OCAL) team competes against other Orange County schools in a quiz bowl-setting, covering topics including literature, history, science, mathematics, art, music, and current events. The matches have a similar feel to Jeopardy and take place on Thursdays after school. The WVHS OCAL team competed in the 3-2-1 Contest, a pyramid/triad format online event where students answered a number of questions - the first clue being the toughest and worth the most points, with the second and third being less difficult. We are proud to announce that the OCAL Wildcats had a successful season and brought the county trophy back to Warwick after a tournament win against Goshen. Graduating from the team this year are co-captains Henry Gaydos, Thomas Kanz, and Kayla Schmitt. Co-advisors Andrew Warren and Raymond Mark are looking forward to next season and encourage all students who think they might be interested in the team to learn more and consider joining. It's a great way to meet new people, test your knowledge, and have a great time.