

WVCSD EdTalk: June 28, 2023

Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

Following, is the text of Dr. Leach's commencement address to the Class of 2023:

Dear distinguished guests and esteemed Warwick Valley High School graduates, I am delighted to be here today to celebrate this momentous occasion.

The Class of 2023 has made a profound impact on our school, leaving a lasting impression as one of the most accomplished groups to pass through our halls. Looking ahead to the future, I am certain that each and every one of you will continue to achieve greatness beyond your time here at Warwick Valley High School.

Firstly, credit must be given where credit is due: parents, we want to thank you for nurturing these remarkable students who will soon graduate. But here's one last tip for parents: don't assume your parental duties are done the moment they set foot in college. In the blink of an eye, they can and will transform back into their five-year-old selves, knocking on your door and cheerfully demanding, "Mommy, I'm back! Can I borrow your debit card?" In the wise words of Master Jedi Yoda, "Though younglings they are, drain your wallet they will!"

Graduates, let us briefly set aside the lightheartedness. When the time comes for your triumphant return home, rest assured that we will be eagerly awaiting, ready to embrace you with open arms. And today, as proof of the incredible journeys that lie ahead, allow me to share the inspiring tale of a former Warwick Valley High School graduate who chose to return to his roots and achieve greatness – a decision for which we are eternally grateful.

I entitle my speech to you simply as "Be Like Mike." This phrase may remind you of the iconic Gatorade commercial from the 1990s featuring Michael Jordan, where the concept of being like him was inspired by the song "I Wanna Be Like You." In that commercial, Jordan's extraordinary basketball skills were showcased, and it conveyed the enticing message that by drinking Gatorade, one could aspire to reach the same level of success and talent as him.

As you embark on your own journey, I want to shift the focus of "Be Like Mike" to someone much closer to our hearts — Town Supervisor Michael (Mike) Sweeton. Mike retires at the end of this year. So, I invite you to consider Supervisor Michael Sweeton's leadership, dedication, and positive impact as inspiration for your own life paths.

Mike guided us in preserving our beloved town. He brought a vision for creating critical public facilities, expanded recreation opportunities, and strategic economic development. Mike's commitment to serving the community and its citizens was seen in everything he touched. He is a humble leader, and he has left an indelible mark on our town.

So what has Mike taught us? Dedication, focus, vision, resourcefulness, resilience, and humility. Graduates, as you embark on your own journey, remember Mike's leadership qualities. Let his story inspire you to be humble leaders who prioritize others' well-being and work toward the common good. Be agents of positive change in whatever path you choose, whether it be in business, the arts, education, trades or public service.

Remember, "Be like Mike."

Congratulations graduates of 2023. May your future be filled with success, fulfillment, and a lasting legacy of positive impact. Thank you.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue Elementary School celebrated its fourth grade students in a Moving Up Ceremony in the Warwick Valley High School auditorium. The event was attended by proud family members, teachers and school district and building administrators. Congratulations to all of the Park Avenue fourth graders. We know you'll do well in Middle School next year.

The following fourth grade students were recognized at the moving up ceremony for their outstanding achievement in these areas:

NYS Comptroller's Awards for academic achievement and potential for leadership:

Molly Brady (Rose Anne Kuzmiak's class) and Addison Cohen (Gabriel Perez's class)

NYS Attorney General's Triple C Awards for academic success, community service, peer leadership, or overcoming personal obstacles: Miles Alzamora (Alexandria Smith's class) and Alexandra Vetell (Julie Hornbeck's class)

R.O.A.R. Awards: Joseph Parisi and Taylor Gillen (Mrs. Kuzmiak's class); Gavin Astbury and Fiona Morrison (Ms. Hornbeck's class); Krisha Patel and Brendan McCormick (Mr. Perez's class); and Eliana Herrmann (Ms. Smith's class)

Sanfordville Elementary School

On June 21, 173 Sanfordville fourth grade students were recognized for completing their elementary school years and moving up to middle school. BOE President Mr. Keith Parson, BOE Member Bill Fanos, Superintendent Dr. David Leach, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Cindy Leandro, Assistant Superintendent Meghan McGourty, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Patricia Close, Director of Special Education Alexandra DeAngelo attended, with family and friends gathered outside on the beautiful grounds of Sanfordville for this special occasion. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. DeGuisto's 4th Graders who also "signed" the pledge. Mrs. Maraia read their very last read aloud at Sanfordville to them from the book *Be You* by Peter H. Reynolds. The book gave some wonderful advice for them to embrace their future with

positivity and to be true to themselves. Mrs. Greiner introduced the Principal Awards which are given to two students from each class who consistently demonstrate PAWS behavior in and out of the classroom and Mrs. Maraia recognized the recipients for the NYS Attorney General's Triple C Award. Thank you to the SES PTA for hosting an amazing Bowling party celebration at Pin Streets following the ceremony. Students were even to more fun events such as a dunk bucket, potato sack races and more activities when returning to school. Thank you to the fourth grade staff, the PTA planners and all of the super helpful parent volunteers for making the day so special for our fourth graders!

Congratulations to all of our fourth grade students moving up to WVMS. A special shout out to the Principal Leadership Award recipients Silvia Muto, Leighton Brinster, Landon Collins, Karissa Lashuay, Sydney Tomlinson, Philip Ahrens, Olive Torres, Vincent Solis, Talia Klyatis, Joseph Budnar, Scarlett Colon, Lawrence Perry, Chace Green, Waylon Bates, Cora Sarach, Parker Schmehl, Kyle Herrmann, Khloe Jaycox, Payton Blanton, Ella Carcaterra, Lilah Diaz, and Desmond Cartwright. Also, Congratulations to the 2023 NYS Attorney General's Triple "C" Award winners, a tradition in which the NY Attorney General recognizes the "Character, Courage and Commitment" of New York's hard working students. Our winners are Christopher Moccio and Chloe Belasco.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Warwick Valley Middle School recently held its highly anticipated eighth grade Moving Up ceremony, a momentous occasion that celebrated the accomplishments of the graduating class as they transitioned to the next chapter of their educational journey. The ceremony, held in the High School auditorium, was filled with excitement, pride, and heartfelt speeches, leaving an indelible mark on the students, families, and staff in attendance.

The event kicked off with a warm welcome to the enthusiastic crowd of families and loved ones. Student emcee Shane Sutliff skillfully guided the proceedings, adding a touch of youthful enthusiasm to the ceremony.

The ceremony was a testament to the dedication and hard work of the students, families, and staff who supported them along their educational journey. The event not only celebrated their achievements but also instilled a sense of excitement and anticipation for the future.

Warwick Valley High School

Regents exams were administered over the last two weeks of school. The Regents exams are standardized tests taken across the state that are aligned with the New York State Learning Standards and provide a measure of students' proficiency, knowledge and skills in Math, English, Science, and History. Regents exams are a requirement for earning a high school diploma in New York. Requirements differ depending on the type of diploma a student is pursuing, such as

a Regents diploma, an Advanced Regents diploma, or a Regents diploma with advanced designation. To earn a Regents diploma, students must pass a specific number of exams.

Congratulations to our graduating Class of 2023! It has been a unique four years, and your high school administration, faculty and staff are proud of each and every one of you for the things you have achieved during your time at Warwick Valley High School. We look forward to hearing from you in the years to come, to find out how your stories continued. Best wishes for bright futures!