

Weekly Column: Ed Talk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Standards of teaching and learning play a valuable role in ensuring high-quality education for all students. But for our schools, standards must be a set of bars over which we vault, not a target at which we aim.

Warwick Valley Central School District aims to provide all students with the necessary skills to thrive as learners, workers, and citizens. The Board's goals for the district are:

- Provide continuous, collaborative improvement of instruction and instructional leadership that supports the delivery of 21st century skills;
- Deliver continuous data-driven improvement in student performance, engagement and satisfaction using relevant assessments that measure 21st century outcomes;
- Support student success in home, school and community; and
- Foster a culture where individuals are valued and engaged.

The District's plan to accomplish the board's goals revolves around a strategy of preparing students for their future through its focus on key areas:

- Student success: Guaranteed and viable curriculum, project-based learning, Portrait of a Graduate skills;
- Resource stewardship: Efficient budgeting, planning, allocation, facilities, instructional resources;
- Welcoming, caring culture: Customer service, welcoming environment, healthy life choices, professional learning community, success for all students, family engagement; and
- Premier workforce: exceptional employees, talent development

Community input shapes the district's strategy. A few years ago, over 2,250 students, parents, teachers, and community members participated in #TheirFuture, a series of surveys, talks, and meetings. This process was to define and design a modern educational program that fulfills today's students' needs.

Student success means students exhibit specific competencies by the time they graduate as outlined in the District's Portrait of a Graduate. Those dispositions include being a collaborator, communicator, creator/inventor, ethical and global citizen, resilient individual, problem solver, and life-long learner.

The District has built a model for education that is based on a cycle of continuous improvement. The process involves planning, teaching, assessing, and reflecting. The District combines the

domains of effective teaching and learning: Engaging, coherent curriculum; hands-on, experiential learning; authentic, balanced assessment; and a culture for learning to ensure that all students reach the Portrait of a Graduate outcomes.

Over the past several years, our outstanding faculty and staff have accomplished much in this regard. With that said, we have a long way to go. As we enter the 2023-24 school year, we are re-energized and focused on moving our goals forward.

The District plans to place emphasis on the metrics needed to clearly attain the Board of Education's goals. Following the Board's goal of data-driven instruction, the District uses a data inquiry cycle to guide its program review. The data inquiry cycle is a series of steps, gaining perspective; preparing data; discovering or uncovering results from the data; meeting, discussing, and adjusting the program for improvement; and identifying next steps; then repeating the cycle as necessary.

It's a deliberate approach to moving the district forward.

In the Fall, the Board will examine the District's report card and other data measures to evaluate student outcomes. More data teams will be formed throughout the district. Feedback will be sought from students and parents as well as analyzing student assessment results. This approach will guide the District's decisions on its future programs.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue & Sanfordville Elementary School: Summer Academy students continued their academic and other growth this week. Some of the learning included first-grade students in Rebekah Jackson/Melissa Lindberg's class engaging in daily STEM challenges. Children were tasked with applying a prescribed STEM engineering process to complete each challenge. They followed this process: Define the problem. Imagine/brainstorm solutions. Plan a creative way to solve the problem. Construct a solution.) Examples of these STEM challenges include: 1) Build an animal habitat with popsicle sticks and laundry clips. 2) Build the tallest structure you can using one can of Playdough, popsicle sticks, and laundry clips, and 3) Find three to four items in nature that could be repurposed to act as paintbrushes. Use these natural resources to paint a picture.

Second-grade students in Aimee Urvater's/Lauren Hughes' class have been reviewing long vowel teams during word work time. Children learn different ways to expand their fluency skills as they read various texts. The students enjoy practicing their word work skills in fun ways during independent center time as they also play phonics games with their partners. During math time, second-graders review place value and the meaning of the digits in the tens and ones places. To help them develop their knowledge base, students build two-digit numbers using place value manipulatives and practice showing these same numbers in expanded form.

Jennifer Disy's and Alexandra Steinberg's third graders have been working hard to create a classroom community where everyone feels welcome and valued. The class celebrated their classroom community with a tie-dye themed day! In ELA, their students have been working on accurately sequencing stories using words such as "first, next, then, and last." Students also created a flapbook to demonstrate their knowledge of identifying the main idea and story sequencing.

Our fourth-grade team took part in a project-based learning opportunity that took them on a cultural journey through the history and origins of piñatas. Teachers and students needed help from middle school teacher, Andrew Sheets, who facilitated a paper mache project as the culminating experience!

Warwick Valley Middle School: Although we have been busy learning during our Summer Academy and Extended School year programs, we have been just as busy with our close community partnerships this summer.

The Middle School represented the Warwick Valley Central School District at National Night Out. The Warwick Valley Prevention Coalition and the Town of Warwick Police Department collaborated to bring this free, family-friendly event to the community at Veterans Memorial Park. Students and their families enjoyed hotdogs and food prepared and served by the Warwick Police Department. Students from across the district had fun making crafts, participating in activities, and climbing onto one of the several vehicles in the Touch-A-Truck area. Additionally, many non-profit organizations offered everyone the opportunity to learn more about them. This event provided an opportunity to bring local resources and residents together under positive circumstances. Chelsea Fox, our co-SADD Club advisor, was there with Associate Principal Christopher Radon to face paint, tattoo, and play cornhole with our students. It was a great time for everyone who attended.

The second group of students began the Junior Police Academy. This two-week program is open to students ages 10-15, who have an interest in police service, community, government, and/or a general appreciation for public service. This program is designed for the children to enjoy themselves while gaining an understanding of the demands of police training and service. The Junior Police Academy consists of physical training, lectures, presentations and hands-on activities. During the two-week academy, students learn about different aspects of police work, including: K-9 demonstrations, self-defense, CPR and fire safety, and fingerprinting, and visit the Orange County 911 and Crime Analysis centers.

Warwick Valley High School: As the sun sets on another glorious summer, our beloved seniors are gearing up for the exciting journey of life after high school graduation. For many of them, this adventure entails higher education and college. With the college application process now at the forefront of their minds, the guidance department has been diligently working behind the

scenes. This effort is to ensure our students have all the support they need. That is why we are excited to announce our College Application Workshops.

College application processes can be thrilling and overwhelming. Our dedicated counselors have meticulously crafted these workshops to provide our students with the guidance, tools, and confidence they need to navigate this pivotal stage successfully.

Every Wednesday during August, the High School Guidance Department holds a College Application Workshop in the Media Center at the Middle School. Sessions begin at 9 a.m. Please bring your fully charged Chromebook to the session you attend.