

Weekly Column: Ed Talk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
September 13, 2023

It was a successful first week of school for our buildings, teachers and students, as you will see below. Our teachers and staff helped our students quickly focus on academics and now, in the blink of an eye, the school year is already rolling. I appreciate all the work our teachers and staff put into successful launches every year!

I have been reflecting on the heatwave. I would like to express my appreciation for the support our taxpayers have given us to create a relatively cool learning environment. Our taxpayers continue to support our capital projects, which pay for extensive air conditioning upgrades. This work ensures that our students learn in a comfortable environment. Some school districts only viable options on extremely hot days is to close schools or have their students leave their regular classrooms and relocate to cooler areas of the buildings. I appreciate that we don't have that concern here.

Because it is the start of the school year, it is also time to ask parents to take advantage of our transportation system. When students utilize school buses to commute back and forth to school it reduces traffic at drop-off and pick-up at our schools and makes the whole process run more efficiently. Students get into classes earlier at the beginning of the day and get out of parking lots and home earlier after school. And, of course, they are safer than cars. If you can, please have your children take our buses.

The week culminated in the unveiling of our upgraded football field and track on Friday, September 8. While mother nature delayed the contest, the Wildcats christened the upgraded field with a win over Kingston. We are so thankful for our community's support to make this new multi-sport athletic field and expanded track a reality for our students!

Don't forget about next week's Spirit Trophy game against Goshen, scheduled for 7 p.m., Thursday, September 14, at Goshen High School. Our fans like to travel and our players always appreciate Warwick fans at events away from home.

And, lastly, let your Wildcats spirit roar in October! Spirit Week begins Oct. 2. Faculty, staff and students are busy preparing activities and Disney-themed days. The celebration will wrap up with our Homecoming game against Wallkill at 1:30 on Saturday, October 7.

We look forward to a great year. Go Wildcats!

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue's students returned to the building and joined faculty and staff. All of the kindergarten teachers met their new students outside as they disembarked from their buses or were dropped off by their families. Teachers used a color-coded scheme that aligned with students' colored PAW tags to ensure they found their way quickly and easily.

Teachers did not waste time igniting this year's learning. During these first few days, classes focused on the important work of establishing behavioral and other expectations *vis-a-vis* the ROAR Matrix which focuses on ways students can demonstrate Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance, and Responsibility throughout each day and in all areas of the building. Additionally, teachers incorporated different texts, such as *Our Class is a Family* by Shannon Olsen, which helped reinforce this messaging. Others talked about and modeled ways students can be "Bucket Fillers" by being kind to their friends.

Although it is still early in the year, the next couple of weeks will continue to expand on all of the aforementioned. On September 15, the entire student body will gather for a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) assembly to kick off the school year, establish norms across all grades, and to hear about our system of acknowledgements and rewards for students that consistently meet or exceed the standard. Lastly, the kindergarteners will go on their annual walking trip to the Albert Wisner Library. They will learn about this amazing local resource.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Kindergarten students were excited but anxious! The fourth graders proudly cruised the hallways as the new role models for the building! The staff was amazing with all hands on deck to assist students and families as they moved through the day. Busing and student pick-ups can always be challenging the first few days, but smiles and positive, supportive attitudes can always ease anxieties! Students and teachers were excited to kick off the school year with fun getting-to-know-each-other activities, scavenger hunts and tours of the building, meeting their special area teachers and lunch monitors, and establishing their new routines.

Thank you to the Sanfordville PTA for welcoming teachers and staff back to school with the gift of a pen and a personalized notepad on opening day. To finish off the week the PTA hosted a Welcome Back Breakfast for the staff to enjoy. Everyone appreciated the thoughtful gestures and generosity of the families!

Warwick Valley Middle School

The Middle School opened its doors for a fresh start and exciting school year as the Wildcat waved outside and welcomed students with open arms. New Warwick students and fifth graders were welcomed by the Wildcat Ambassadors. The wonderful Middle School PTA purchased bouquets of colorful balloons to help students identify their teams and classrooms. Seventh and eighth-grade students navigated and workshopped their rotating schedules in homerooms the

next day. The seventh graders were ecstatic to begin decorating and using their lockers and moving to “the other side” of the building.

During the "Welcome Back" session, students learned about policies, procedures, and expectations. Students also learned about this year's theme, "Let's Be Epic." Every student was given a Superman emblem to fill out and decorate. Students discussed what it means to be “epic” and how they can be “epic” or have an “epic” year. Students then filled out emblems with this information. Teachers hung these emblems outside their classrooms. The school will utilize and refer to them throughout the year.

Additionally, all grades had grade-level assemblies led by the administration. Students learned who to speak to in the main office or in guidance. Policies, rules, and procedures have been shared with students. Students were then shared with exciting events to look forward to this school year, such as the spirit week and pep rally in October, marching in the homecoming parade, the annual color run in October, the October 7th and 8th Harvest Dance, and our newest event, the Teachers versus Harlem Wizards game in January.

Warwick Valley High School

The high school kicked off with excitement and anticipation. For many students, it was a chance to reunite with their friends after a summer break filled with adventures and relaxation. The hallways buzzed with animated conversations and joyous greetings as old friends embraced each other and shared stories of their summer escapades. The sense of community and camaraderie added energy to the day.

We took a proactive approach to ensure that all students understood and embraced the Wildcat Scholars expectations. Each grade level gathered together to meet with their class advisors and administrative team to refresh their standards, rules and values. This collective gathering emphasized the importance of community and support within the school. It reinforced that everyone plays a crucial role in maintaining a positive and safe learning environment.