

Weekly Column: Ed Talk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Every September, as students return from summer break, I am struck by their talents. It brings me such joy to share with you their passionate pursuits, innate gifts, and noteworthy successes. This approach offers a glimpse into the rich academic and extracurricular programs available in Warwick Valley schools. This week, join me as I highlight four gifted musicians, and two exceptional students who are taking up roles as student school board representatives this school year.

I am thrilled to announce that Warwick Valley High School students Conner Price, Kayla Ludovicy, Ben Poka, and Zoe Link have been honored with selection for the prestigious 2023 New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Winter Conference ensembles. This accolade stands as a testament to their skill and steadfast dedication to their musical endeavors. Each student has forged a distinct musical path, displaying outstanding talent in their respective specialties.

Conner Price, a junior at Warwick, has been part of the music department since moving to Warwick in fourth grade. Beginning with viola lessons from Ms. Tamara Moser, he has continued to play the instrument while also becoming a vital member of the school's vocal groups. He joined the mixed choir freshman year. Now in his second year with the high school's Meistersingers, Conner has performed at significant venues like Radio City Music Hall. Conner is honored and excited about his selection and prepared for the rigorous rehearsals ahead of the Rochester performances.

Kayla Ludovicy, a multi-talented musician, plays the oboe and the English horn, and has been selected for the All-State Symphonic Band. Beginning her oboe journey in fourth grade, she has participated in notable musical events since middle school. She expanded her repertoire to include the English horn in freshman year and later learned to play the trumpet. She became a lead player in the Warwick jazz and marching bands, as noted by Ms. Megan Shafer. Kayla, who recently performed Strauss's Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra as her NYSSMA solo, expressed her excitement and honor at being recognized as a "doubler" in the band.

Ben Poka, a proficient drummer, has secured a position in the All-State Jazz Band. His musical journey began with classical percussion in fourth grade, expanding to include the drum set by sixth grade. Over the years, he has actively participated in the Orange County Music Educators Association (OCMEA) All-County Music Festival, focusing more on jazz as time progresses. Ben also plays with the Hudson Valley Youth Jazz Orchestra, where he auditions annually. This experience encouraged him to audition for the All-State band, showcasing his skills through a solo drum set piece for NYSSMA. In his senior year, Ben has not only continued to excel as a drummer in the jazz band but has also taken on a peer leadership role as a 'teaching assistant' in the concert band's percussion section, as highlighted by Ms. Shafer.

Renowned viola player Zoe Link has earned an alternate position in a highly competitive section. This is thanks to her impeccable performance and perfect score for her NYSSMA solo, showcasing her dedication and talent. Her teacher, Ms. Elissa Maynard, praised Zoe's artistic determination and ability to execute a challenging piece. This achievement, along with those of her peers, highlights Warwick's exceptional musical accomplishment.

Echoing the sentiments of WVHS educators such as Noreen Hanson, Ms. Shafer, and Ms. Maynard, the road to this achievement has been paved with countless hours of practice, lessons, and an unyielding desire to excel. Their efforts fill our school with pride and highlight the enriching and nurturing environment WVHS's music program fosters.

In Warwick Valley Schools, it has become a customary practice for a student or student representatives to join the Board of Education at regular business meetings. These students serve as a voice for the student body, offering updates on the current happenings at the school to both the board and the wider community. As expected, the selection process for this significant role requires candidates to demonstrate a keen interest in civic responsibilities and leadership qualities. This year, we welcome Clare Calandra and Dylan Burke. They will join us in these significant discussions during school board meetings.

Clare Calandra was chosen for her present role by the Guidance Department. A student from Greenwood Lake, Clare has excelled at Warwick Valley High School. She finds a sense of community through her participation in various sports, clubs, and activities including the trombone choir and Mu Alpha Theta. She has positively impacted her community by participating in events such as fall clean-ups and Veterans' Day breakfast. Clare has played a significant role in helping students from Greenwood Lake assimilate into Warwick Valley High School. She has dedicated numerous hours to student tours and open house sessions. Through her efforts, she has become a testament to the potential successes students can achieve by seizing the opportunities available at Warwick Valley High School.

Dylan Burke was also chosen for his current role by the Guidance Department. Dylan is always eager to volunteer his time to help others. He regularly contributes to community initiatives, actively participating in various events organized by Beautiful People. He also spearheads blood drives and fundraising efforts for different groups. He is a part of the Autism Awareness Club and the student center, where he advocates for inclusivity and understanding. In addition, Dylan has proven his dedication to his studies through his active membership in the National Honor Society and the National Society of High School Scholars. He has also been included on the honor roll. Besides his academic achievements, Dylan served as a class senator for the class of 2024 for two years. He is always looking to take on leadership roles whenever the opportunity arises.

Throughout the year, you can expect regular updates from me about our students' accomplishments and activities. These updates may appear in feature articles I publish, such as "Superintendent Spotlight" or "Artist of the Week." Naturally, we will also highlight our athletes and scholars' achievements. While it may not be feasible for me to recognize all 3,700 students regularly, I believe that through these features, I can offer our community members a broader

perspective on our school programs. I hope these insights reaffirm your confidence in the bright future ahead, thanks to our students' many talents.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

On Friday, September 15 the students assembled in the gym for a PBIS Kickoff event, which set the tone for school-wide behavioral expectations of ROAR throughout the building (and outside). ROAR stands for Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance, and Responsibility. Through video, students saw staff members acting in unacceptable behaviors and modeling exemplary behaviors. Additionally, students played Jeopardy as a fun assessment of their current understanding. Special thanks to the following for their contributions: Aimee Urvater, Kimberly Dinino, Jeanette Myrick, and Inga Mezzetti. A huge show of gratitude to Joanna Tower for going undercover as the Wildcat mascot!

Theresa Canfield's kindergarten students listened to *The Gingerbread Cowboy*, by Janet Squires. After the story they grabbed their cowboy hats and bandanas and toured the school looking for the Gingerbread Man. The children found clues to where they might find him. They walked to the art room, music room, the gym, our lunch room, the Nurse's Office and, finally, the Main Office. They found a basket full of gingerbread men in the Main Office! They wrangled them up and took them back to class where they decorated their own gingerbread paper cookie.

Students in our fourth grade band are developing ensemble skills. This week they learned how to count together (silently), breathe together, make sounds simultaneously, and stop as a group. The children discover that this process is easy in small groups of one or two students but challenging in a larger ensemble setting. While they still have a lot of work to do, we know they will sound great by the time of the Spring Concert!

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville's P.A.W.S. Behaviors are their school-wide behavioral expectations. They are part of the district's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative. Our students learn about our expectations through classroom lessons, push-in lessons by our counselors, grade-level events, trimester celebrations, and special activities throughout the year. Positive behavior is reinforced through our P.A.W.S. Bear Hug Ticket Rewards System.

The school's PBIS Team, along with the faculty and staff, identified these expectations as most critical for our students to demonstrate. These expectations help our students create a safe and successful learning environment. This matrix defines what each behavior looks like in the classroom, hallway, cafeteria, bus, bathroom, and playground. These are the P.A.W.S. expectations that everyone in our school community follows. Being Polite, Being Accountable, Making Wise Choices, and Thinking Safety first.

We strive to make expectations clear for children. The use of this matrix teaches children how to abide by these four rules in a positive way. It applies to several aspects of the school. Students

will receive ongoing training regarding these expectations. Positive behavior will be recognized individually and at school-wide celebrations.

Warwick Valley Middle School

As we strive to develop in our students the seven competencies of the district's Portrait of a Graduate, we offer learning and growth opportunities both in and outside the classroom. With the school year now under way, our clubs, intramurals, and sports have begun again. These clubs welcome students to explore interests in the arts, sciences, music, and athletics.

Middle school athletes have lots of ways to stay fit and excel in their sport of choice. Our fifth and sixth grade runners will start a new Mileage Club season. More than 60 runners have already signed up! Madelyn Layng coaches intramural basketball before school for early risers. In seventh and eighth grade, students have the opportunity to try out modified sports. The WVMS Wildcats compete in football, cross country, soccer, volleyball, and cheerleading.

Extracurricular academic clubs give students in every grade the chance to plant lifelong learning seeds by exploring their interests and discovering upcoming ones! Are you a collaborator and communicator? Maybe the Literary Magazine Club is for you. Creator? Innovator? You'll love Odyssey of the Mind's performative problem-solving. You can create, collaborate, communicate, and problem solve in other ways in our Cooking & Sewing Club, Drama Club, and Ukulele or Guitar clubs. There really is something for everyone. Middle School students are also encouraged to take part in the school's peer-elected student government system, Student Senate, which fosters an understanding of representational government, developing ethical and global citizens. All of our extracurricular and athletic opportunities are geared toward helping students become well-rounded and resilient problem solvers!

Finally, thank you to our Wildcat Ambassadors! These invaluable helpers have been busy touring middle school families around the building during our many fall events.

Warwick Valley High School

We strive to cultivate scholars and global citizens capable of making a positive impact on the world. At the heart of this belief is the understanding that true citizenship begins with active service to one's community. By engaging in these acts of service, we foster empathy, responsibility, and a deep sense of connection to others.

Many of our diligent and compassionate WVHS students chose to dedicate their time and efforts this past summer to community service. We acknowledge the students who have helped the Warwick community in so many ways. They put their drive to make a positive impact on their community to work, participating and assisting with numerous community programs – the Pine Island Black Dirt Feast, Warwick's National Night Out, and volunteering with Beautiful People to name a few. We all pride ourselves on our students' willingness to dedicate their time to their community. We also appreciate the commitment to and understanding of social responsibility it expresses. We look forward to showcasing the hundreds of students throughout the year who demonstrate these dispositions.