

**Weekly Column: Ed Talk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**September 6, 2023**

On Thursday, August 31, 2023, the Warwick Valley Central School District welcomed its faculty once more. Teachers dedicated the day to preparing for the forthcoming school year and to meeting the mandated training requirements. On Friday, September 1, I was honored to join nearly 330 of our dedicated educators in the high school auditorium, celebrating the start of the 2023-24 academic year. In my speech, I highlighted our district's primary focus related to safety and security and provided an update on our summer school endeavors and the progress of our construction projects. I paused to share a heartwarming story of a former student who, despite battling brain cancer, has begun his journey at an esteemed Ivy League school.

His profound speech from last year, where he likened his life experiences to his reverence for Tom Petty and the emblematic song "I Won't Back Down," was recounted to inspire our faculty. It served as a potent reminder of the immense influence educators have on students, emphasizing the importance of their dedication and expressing my deep gratitude for their commitment to our students' success.

It's customary on this day for us to celebrate the service anniversaries of our staff members. We acknowledge their dedication when they complete significant milestones of 5, 10, 15, 20 years, and so on. This year, one remarkable staff member marked her 40th year with Warwick Valley Schools! Those being recognized were invited to the stage to receive a commemorative pin in honor of their achievement, often accompanied by a resounding round of applause. Here are the individuals we proudly acknowledged:

*5 Years of Service:* Curtis Akacki (Courier), Brett Algera (Teacher), Ann Marie Banker (Teacher Aide), Samantha Bevacqua (Teacher), Hernan Cruz (Security), Veronica DeGuisto (Teacher), Francine DeGuzman (Teacher Aide), Stephen Garby (Teacher), Brad Garcia (Teacher), Karen Hurd (Teacher Aide), Rebekah Jackson (Teacher Aide), Megan Kimiecik (Nurse), Chase Kohler (Bldg. & Grounds), Tera Kump (Teacher Aide), Kerry Lightbody (Teacher), Noelle Louissaint (Teacher Aide), Sarah Mabie (Custodial), Emily Marotta (Teacher), Daniel Martin (Internal Auditor), Yasheika Mitchell Mighty (Teacher Aide), Ping Moroney (Teacher), Warren Patafio (Teacher), Catherine Sforza (Monitor), Gary Schoellig (Security), Jennifer Sullivan (Teacher Aide), Heather Swet (Teacher), Mary Ellen Thomas (Clerical), Jeanne Tully (Teacher), Aimee Urvater (Teacher), Amanda Wright (Teacher), Jared Yapkowitz (Principal)

*10 Years of Service:* Diane Dzwilewski (Transportation), David Leach (Superintendent), Kim Marcellino (Transportation), Patricia Plunkett (Transportation), Mary Smith (Teacher Aide), William Zwart (Teacher)

*15 Years of Service:* Matthew Carcaterra (Teacher), Dennis Doherty (Transportation), Whitney Finnerty (Teacher), Rachel Heller (Teacher), Amy Introini (Teacher), Julia Maione Kelly (Speech), James Maguire (Security Guard), Renee Mandakas (Transportation), William Mindnich (Transportation), Elizabeth Murrone (Transportation), Kevan Ottochian (Teacher), Toni Ann Pappas (Clerical), Beth Ann Peluso (Teacher), Roy Quackenbush (Custodian), Lisa Reece (Teacher), Regina Satkowski (Teacher), Barbra Scarpulla (Teacher), Tamara Scotto (Psychologist), Kristen Spano (Teacher), Philip Szumlaski (Teacher), Kristin Touw (Teacher), Julie Valenti (Business Office), Peter VanDeWater (Teacher), Mary Zeedyk (Transportation)

*20 Years of Service:* Burt Atten (Transportation), Barbara Barron (Transportation), Christy Brown (Teacher), Amanda Calabrese (Psychologist), Sarah Cordisco (Teacher), Heather Davis (Teacher), Donna Denny (Teacher), Melissa Hamilton (Teacher), Catherine Kohlberger (Business Office), Ernest Lambe (Custodian), Janet Landrigan (Teacher Aide), Corinne Lane (Teacher), Suzanne Lepski (Clerical), Teresa Lindsay (Teacher), Graig McElroy (Teacher), Tamara Moser (Teacher), Patricia O'Connor (Teacher), Elizabeth Peters (Transportation), Alissa Pezzello (Teacher Aide), Barbara Rudinski (Transportation), Nicole Sisco (Teacher), Raymond Yarwood (Transportation)

*25 Years of Service:* Dorothy Altaro (Monitor), Barbara Ripley-Brown (Business Office), Kerry Dawson (Teacher), Jeanine Fogler (Teacher), Al Fringuello (Spec. Ed), Robert Kirschke (Teacher), Maribel Lang (Monitor), Rocco Manno (Teacher), Ray Mark (Teacher) Carol Mindnich (Transportation), Jeanette Myrick (Guidance), Sheila Scheuermann (Clerical), Lenora Shook (Teacher), Suesette White (Teacher), Christine Wittenberg (Teacher)

*30 Years of Service:* Theresa Canfield (Teacher), Christine Mahon (Speech), Richard Ronzoni (Teacher)

*35 Years of Service:* Mark Thompson (Custodian)

*40 Years of Service:* Elissa Morabito (Psychologist)

As our new school year begins, you will also see some new faces! Last week, during our new teacher orientation, we welcomed new faculty members. This summer, the District also appointed three new associate principals, one each at Warwick Valley High School, Warwick Valley Middle School and Sanfordville Elementary School.

We are excited to have them join our school district. All three administrators are uniquely qualified to provide support for our students and staff, and they are looking forward to learning and growing in the Warwick Valley school community.

When you are in our schools this fall, welcome them!

*Nicholas Emanuele, Secondary Associate Principal at the High School:* Mr. Emanuele comes to the district from Minisink Valley Central School District where he was a health and physical education teacher since 2014. He was awarded the opportunity to be the full-time leave replacement for the assistant principal at Minisink Valley High School for the majority of the 2021-22 school year. In that role he was involved in daily and long-term administrative responsibilities, including interviewing candidates, scheduling, organizing Regents exams, resolving conflicts, handling disciplinary issues, and supervising school events. During the 2022-23 school year, in addition to teaching, he continued his administrative role from the previous school year.

He successfully completed the Educational Leadership Program at Long Island University, holds a master's degree in Instructional Technology from New York Institute of Technology and a bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education from East Stroudsburg University.

He was the varsity football coach at Minisink Valley from 2012 until last year, the track coach since 2013 and the varsity golf coach the last two years.

His career plan was to eventually become an athletic director but he enjoyed the team aspects of working with a principal and associate principals as a leave replacement in the assistant principal role.

"I just like the camaraderie with the people you work with every day, so I changed my path," he said. "I really liked the teamwork, rather than the athletic director path because you get to work as a team."

Having also graduated from high school at Minisink Valley, Mr. Emanuele said he is well aware of the rivalry that exists between the schools. He said he's had fun with the rivalry and respects it.

"It was going to take a lot for me to leave the school that I grew up at, and it would take a special school for me to make that move. I feel my values and qualities are aligned with this district and community. I am super happy to be here. Let's go Wildcats. I am a Wildcat now."

*Timothy Ferraro, Associate Principal at Sanfordville Elementary School:* Mr. Ferraro comes to the district from Clarkstown Central School District, where he was a sixth grade teacher, instructing in English, science and math at Felix Festa Middle School. He also served as a sixth-grade team facilitator, acting as a liaison between teachers and school administration. He assisted in writing curriculum for English, science and math. He had been working at the school since 2004. He was also the Clarkstown High School North girls lacrosse coach since 2019 and has coached various school and club lacrosse and soccer teams for years.

He was a computer/technology teacher at Hudson Elementary School from 2002 to 2004. He is a 2017 recipient of the Mid-Hudson School Study Council's Teaching Excellence Award.

He holds a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from Canisius College, a Master of Science in Instructional Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education.

The reputation of the school district and the community is what attracted Mr. Ferraro to Warwick. “It really was everybody who works here and sends their children here to the district, they have nothing but glowing reviews about the district,” he said. “It just has an awesome reputation. Living in Orange County, I know the positive reputation that the school district has and I just wanted to be part of it, so I am just trying to add to it.”

Mr. Ferraro is looking forward to bringing his passion and excitement for nurturing and seeing students grow to Sanfordville and we are too! “It’s why I got into education,” he said.

*Jordan Slattery, Secondary Associate Principal at the Middle School:* Ms. Slattery comes to the district from Longwood Preparatory Academy located in the Bronx, where she was the Dean and Acting Assistant Principal for School Dances, After School Programs, Saturday School, and SAT Prep. Among her many roles at Longwood over the past four years, Ms. Slattery was an algebra and finance teacher, and also served as a Technology Coordinator, Mathematics Curriculum Coordinator and the NX Academy Coordinator during the difficult 2020-2021 school year.

Prior to Longwood, Ms. Slattery taught algebra at Fordham Leadership Academy. She also took on several leadership responsibilities for the Academy, including service on the school’s Programming Committee, focusing on Mathematics Pathways. She also served as the Math Representative to the school’s Professional Learning Committee. She mentioned that the experience, along with the knowledge and skills gained over the past three years— taking on increasing administrative responsibility – have prepared her for this new position with Warwick Valley Schools.

“My proudest professional moment is having gotten to this spot that I’m in now,” she said with signature enthusiasm, something her new colleagues have already seen firsthand. All summer, whether in her office, the hallways, or playing pickleball and slip-n-slide kickball, Ms. Slattery has been there.

Besides Warwick Valley’s reputation for strong programming and student success, the atmosphere in Warwick – both the school and community at large – was part of what drew Ms. Slattery to the district. She is excited to be here, meeting a whole new student body and team of educators.

“I’m looking forward to being engaged with the kids, and bringing as much teaching knowledge and experience that I have, to the teachers I’ll be working with here,” she said. “That, and just continuing to grow and learn.”

As the sun sets on our kickoff events, I’m filled with a sense of gratitude and pride. The dedication and commitment of our long-standing faculty, coupled with the fresh energy of our new staff members, create a powerful blend that promises a memorable academic year. The stories of resilience, such as that of our former student, resonate deeply, highlighting the profound impact educators have on shaping the futures of our students. Every staff member’s name called, every applause heard, and every pin awarded are symbols of our collective

dedication to the education and well-being of our youth. It's a beautiful reminder that together, as one Warwick Valley community, we can overcome any challenge and achieve greatness. Here's to a year of growth, learning, and success for all.