

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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The Warwick Valley Central School District recently started publishing a weekly feature called Portrait of a Graduate in Action. This new weekly feature will provide greater meaning and examples to our school district's Portrait of a Graduate, a representation of the district's priority goals for teaching and learning to create graduates who are collaborators, communicators, creators and innovators, ethical and global citizens, resilient individuals, problem-solvers, and life-long learners. Educating our students on these seven qualities will help ensure that they have a strong foundation to learn, lead, and succeed after graduation.

The weekly feature is posted every Friday on our website's homepage and in our District News. Our latest post took readers into Nicole Sisco's art room at Warwick Valley High School. In her class, students learn more than just how to make sculptures out of clay and draw with pencils. They learn to be creators and innovators, utilizing their imagination and evidence-based knowledge. They strategize to solve problems, investigate answers to their own questions, and meet challenges with solutions to further their own learning. They often share their ideas and feelings through the arts, design and building processes.

The Portrait of a Graduate model was created through a multi-year effort to define and design a modern educational program that meets today's students' needs. Now, educators, administrators and staff in the school district work every day — from the moment a student enters kindergarten through the graduation ceremony — to ensure that Warwick Valley graduates possess Portrait of a Graduate skills.

Now is also a good time to remind everyone of our weekly Superintendent's Spotlight and Superintendent's Artist of the Week profiles. I honor and recognize students from the Warwick Valley Central School District who perform exemplary work. These articles highlight their remarkable academic, artistic, athletic, civic, and social achievements.

It has been my pleasure for the past seven years to shine a light on Warwick students who achieve their goals, take on tough projects, win awards, create exceptional pieces of art, perform random acts of kindness, and are helpers and role models for their peers. Our 3,750-plus students give me a lot to be proud of day to day, and the Superintendent's Spotlight and Superintendent's Artist of the Week are an excellent place for the district to tell everyone about some of the attributes that make our students so special.

This year, we've already recognized two Artists of the Week – High School senior Isabel Coppola, who attended the School of Visual Arts Photography Summer Program on a full scholarship and came away with some wonderful photos. Zoe Link, a senior violist and violinist, was selected for the 87th Annual NYSSMA Winter Conference ensembles. This was based on her excellent solo performance at the NYSSMA. We also featured fifth grader Nate Spear. Nate stayed active and sharp over his summer break by participating in Summer Academy, taking robotics, led by High School teachers Andrew Warren and Jamie Barchi. Ettamoya Byrne studied deforestation impacts in the Amazon rainforest during class last year. She was so concerned about what she learned that she wrote a two-page letter to President Biden.

And she got a letter back! Lastly, there's our recently elected Middle School Student Senate, made up of eighth-graders Denis McAteer, president; Olivia Conklin, vice president; Lily Kalil, secretary; and Jadalynn Acosta, treasurer. The Senate provides a platform for students to voice their ideas, concerns, and suggestions. They work diligently to make the Middle School community more vibrant, inclusive, and academically enriching.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Kindergarten classes walked to the Albert Wisner Public Library. Students learned all about the library and the different activities and resources there. Kindergarteners also participated in collectively writing a story about the library with the help of librarians! Their trip concluded with each child selecting a book to bring home to keep to remember their special trip.

Fourth graders have been working hard to create a "Lost in Autumn" descriptive writing piece. Each piece will focus on an autumn activity specific to the season. Students will focus on "showing" not "telling" in their writing, using their five senses, specific word choices and figurative language. The final step will be to publish and create an illustration for display in our hallways. Keep an eye out for these amazing pieces!

ROAR stands for Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance, and Responsibility. Every week, one student from each class is recognized for exemplifying ROAR behavior. Here are some of the ROAR Golden Ticket winners this week:

Kindergarten: Joey Crispino, Hunter Zack, Arvind Conklin, Frankie Tower, Mason Weisgarber

First grade: Kyle Cosmillo, Khalia Sinnemaki, Mark D'Agnese, Lily Diehl, Teagan McNamee

Second grade: Matteo Crisano, Ali Normandia, Christian Carrasquillo, Benjamin Dolis, Lucas DeYoung

Third grade: Ella Kimieck, Dominic Flores, James Schaefer, Bellamy Cordova, Nola Alzamora

Fourth grade: Camden Fredrick, James Chavez Carey, Charles Ellsworth, Brad Moeller Sabina Fasano

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville teachers conducted review lessons and drills with students during "School Safety Week." Staff reassured students that the goal is to always keep them safe while at school. Teachers discussed emergency procedures with students each day. Teachers explained the five main types of emergency signals they may hear at school during an emergency. Teachers received detailed instructions on how to present information to students. The goal is to help

students feel safe and never fear them. Students and staff successfully completed the first formal lockdown drill of the year. The safety resource officer assisted with the drill.

Friday, October 6th was also the County-Wide “Go Home Early” drill. All schools were dismissed 15 minutes early.

The Sanfordville PTA sponsored the school’s Touch-A-Truck event for the community. Our Warwick students were able to get up close with a variety of different types of trucks from all over our community. Some of the trucks that our students and their families were invited to explore included trucks and more from the following groups: Snap On Tools, Warwick EMT, Warwick Volunteer Fire Department, Pine Island Fire Department, New York State Police, Orange County Sheriff’s Department, Warwick Police Department, Warwick Department of Public Works, and more! Our guests were also able to grab a bite to eat from, The Bus, Groovy Scoops, and Emily’s Hearth. A huge thank you to our PTA for organizing this event, and thank you to everyone that attended!

To wrap-up Sanfordville’s School Safety Week, our PTA sponsored a Hero’s luncheon for local first responders and essential workers. Police officers, firefighters, EMTs, doctors, nurses, and sanitation workers joined our students during their lunch periods to sit and talk with them. Our students were very welcoming and asked thoughtful questions. We thank all the first responders for visiting Sanfordville and for their dedication to keeping us all safe! Sunwha Gil’s art students really embraced School Safety Week. The students created ‘Thank You’ cards for our everyday heroes. This artwork is proudly displayed for everyone to see in the school’s “Accountable Ave.” hallway.

Warwick Valley Middle School

In a vibrant celebration of Chinese culture and traditions, Ping Xu Moroney and her enthusiastic eighth-grade Chinese 1 students displayed many characteristics of Portrait of a Graduate by recently transporting their younger peers in the fifth- and sixth-grade Multi-age Classrooms to the heart of China. They performed a captivating skit based on the Mid-Autumn Festival. It was an immersive experience that left the students entertained, culturally enriched and wanting to learn Chinese next year when the formal foreign language program begins.

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival, is a time-honored and widely celebrated tradition in many parts of Asia. It’s a momentous occasion centered on mooncakes, legends, and the full moon. Ms. Moroney and her students’ skit vividly portray the core elements of the Mid-Autumn Festival. The story revolves around the legend of Chang’e and Houyi, a tale that resonates deeply with the festival’s significance. Students witnessed the narrative unfold before them, learning about cultural significance and legends passed down through generations.

Following the skit, students enjoyed delectable mooncakes. These treats come in various flavors, with the most popular ones featuring lotus seed paste, red bean paste, and sometimes even salted egg yolks. Sharing mooncakes adds a communal element to the festival. Students were also given hands-on experience with traditional Chinese calligraphy. Using real brushes made from bamboo and animal hair, they created the striking characters and symbols that define this unique art form. In an increasingly interconnected world, such initiatives play a crucial role in fostering respect among people and appreciation for all cultures.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School is not just known for its academic excellence but also for a cherished tradition that brings our entire community together – the Homecoming Parade. This event celebrates school spirit, creativity and collaboration. Each class worked tirelessly to create a dazzling float and develop an engaging skit for the parade.

In the days leading up to the parade, our students showcased their mastery of the core values embodied in our Portrait of a Graduate. They came together to brainstorm and shape a theme for their float, and then diligently worked to transform that vision into reality. Each float is held to specific criteria, including a moving component. This adds an extra layer of ingenuity to the creative process.

This year, the weather did not cooperate on Saturday, with heavy rains at noon. However, this didn't stop us! The parade was rescheduled for Monday at 4:00 pm. It is imperative to cherish this tradition, one of many that separates us from so many communities nationwide. The Homecoming Parade unifies our community and provides a platform for expressing affection for Warwick Schools. It serves as an occasion to proudly display the school's spirit and pride, and our students approach this responsibility with a profound sense of purpose. Our parade transcends being merely a procession of floats; it is a living testament to our students' creativity, dedication, and unity.

This cherished tradition nurtures pride and belonging among our students, as well as serves as a testament to their talents and collaborative spirit. With each passing year, as the parade travels down Main Street, it leaves a lasting impression on both participants and spectators alike. This serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring importance of school traditions and the profound impact that arises when a community comes together as one. Thank you to all the community members and educators who spent hours last week supervising and helping our students build their floats.