

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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When families and students face the difficult task of choosing a college or university, the value component plays a part in the equation. Weighing schools' program offerings and surroundings against their cost of tuition, room and board and other expenses should not be taken lightly.

There is no arguing the value public institutions can bring to the table with lower tuition costs when making this choice. The tuition at State University of New York schools is a fraction of the average cost of a private college in the United States, with a higher average graduation rate and a lower overall debt load.

For those contemplating college, it's wise to consider SUNY options due to their combination of high quality education and lower tuition fees. Recent polls indicate a significant shift in higher education trends. In 2023, only 62% of high school graduates nationwide opted for college, likely due, in part, to the cost. This increase in college costs hinders wealth-building opportunities. More than half of those who borrowed between 2010 and 2019 still carry debts significantly higher than their initial loans. However, the U.S. job market appears to need more college graduates than educational institutions will supply. This trend is expected to result in a deficit of 6.5 million graduates by 2030, which in turn may drive up the wage premiums associated with a college degree.

That makes the ApplySUNY admission fee waiver weeks at SUNY the perfect time to benefit from two valuable opportunities at once. But you need to hurry. The free application offer lasts until Sunday, Oct. 29. SUNY allows students to apply for admission to up to five SUNY campuses with no application fee. Students will not need a special code to access the application promotion, as long as they submit their applications during the free application period. Students may use either the ApplySUNY application or the Common App to submit up to five free SUNY college applications.

Students can apply through the SUNY website, at www.suny.edu/attend/apply-to-suny. The ApplySUNY landing page also includes one-click access to detailed application instructions, Frequently Asked Questions about the program, a list of SUNY Admissions offices, and a list of SUNY campuses that accept the ApplySUNY application.

Two ways to apply...

ApplySUNY Users

When you get to the payment page, it will show the first five campus application fees waived. These are the applications paid by SUNY.

Common App Users

You must apply online, campus by campus. During the process, each SUNY page will indicate the following: “It is free application week with The State University of New York through October 29th! Would you like SUNY to pay your application fee?” Select “Yes” and your fee will be waived for that SUNY school.

In addition to ApplySUNY fee waiver week, SUNY also offers ongoing fee waivers that apply to 60 percent of all NY high school seniors. I encourage students and parents to take advantage of the upcoming ApplySUNY fee waiver week. I also encourage them to check eligibility for these similar waivers provided annually by SUNY.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

In the Library/Media Center, first grade students read *Gustavo The Shy Ghost* and discussed what makes a ghost “glow” like Gustavo. Matthew Spicehandler shared, “By thinking and talking about what makes us ‘glow’ or activities or how we can cheer ourselves up during hard times, students can acquire skills that make them resilient individuals. Additionally, learning about each other’s preferences and predilections helps students become more accepting of one another and others in general. This creates more effective collaborators, communicators and global citizens.”

Fourth grade readers have begun a unit on interpreting characters and started the read aloud, *The Tiger Rising*, by Kate DiCamillo. Students focus on reading intensely to “grow” ideas. Students learned that selecting books based on interest is just one way to motivate intense reading. Students could recommend books for their classmates. This led to a lively discussion about different authors, genres, and books part of a series. Students were excited to include their recommendations on post-it notes on books’ inside covers, create bins of recommended books, and have their suggestions showcased on classroom shelves.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Second graders in Melissa Sukennikoff and Ana Agostinoni's class began their reading unit. They learned different strategies and used them while reading. The class took the next step and tried an author's craft called "move on their own!" After reading *Those Darn Squirrels*, the students needed to use the craft to have the animals act like humans. The students created stories to make animals come alive. They had dogs make phone calls, cats dance, and ducks run for president!

Art teacher Sunwha Gil and her students met for the Art Club where 15 artists crafted their masterpieces. The students discussed Tim Burton as well as the famous movie, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Students participated in a short brainstorming session and then Ms. Gil provided references for Halloween inspiration to create posters. Students discussed how to redesign their posters inspired by *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Ms. Gil's goals were to provide an opportunity for student-driven learning and an enjoyable experience for these young artists.

Warwick Valley Middle School

French I classes have learned how to describe the features of a person. The teacher, Michael Justiana, has challenged his students to present individuals in their families in written, verbal, and visual form. Students have had to write about their family members. In addition, the students have had to describe each of their family members in French, while their partners have made the greatest effort to draw out the members of their families. This activity was filled with flawless French and laughs! The students truly show collaboration and communication.

Corinne Lane's Home and Careers students had to solve a kitchen crime scene in a Halloween-themed lesson. Ms. Lane wanted her students to investigate safety concerns and hazards in a crime scene kitchen. Groups of four to five students had to work together as detectives to identify the "crime" in the kitchen. In addition, these groups had to explain why that was a safety concern/hazard and correct it. Ms. Lane took a lot of dedication and time recreating a crime scene in the kitchen for this activity.

Warwick Valley High School

The recent Financial Aid Night and College Fair was a resounding success, bringing together students, parents, and college representatives in a vibrant and informative atmosphere. With over 40 universities participating, the event provided an excellent opportunity for high school students to explore higher education options. College representatives shared valuable insights about their institutions, academic programs, and campus life, giving students a chance to envision their future paths.

In tandem with the college fair, parents were provided with crucial information regarding the evolving financial aid filing process. Understanding college finances is paramount. This session ensured that parents were equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate the often intricate landscape of financial assistance. Overall, the night was a testament to the collective commitment to education. It highlighted the collaborative efforts of students, parents and educational institutions in propelling the next generation towards their academic aspirations.