

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Part of the mission of the Warwick Valley Central School District is to prepare all of our students for their future. We make sure our students have the core competencies and skills of our Portrait of a Graduate when they accept their diplomas.

Our definition of intelligence is as unique as the fingerprint for each and every student. Students have different passions, interests and talents. We have the responsibility, and our Board of Education recognizes that responsibility, to provide our students with a broad and rich educational experience.

I can't think of a better example of our school district targeting those competencies in a Portrait of a Graduate than in Career and Technical Education (CTE). Educators in the CTE pathways push our students every day to become Collaborators, Communicators, Creator/Innovators, Ethical and Global Citizens, Resilient Individuals, Problem Solvers, and Life-long Learners. These students experience hands-on learning in real-world learning environments and experiences.

That's why about 150 juniors and seniors attend these pathway programs, both at Warwick Valley High School and Orange-Ulster BOCES, every year.

Recently our high school administration and nine select students presented to our Board of Education valuable information about the internal and external CTE programs. Our students, in particular, told meaningful stories of why they joined the programs and how they impacted their lives.

Warwick Valley High School offers three study pathways - Criminal Justice, Cosmetology and Video Production. Orange-Ulster BOCES delivers a host of other opportunities, such as Carpentry, Culinary Food Trades, Early Childhood Development and Care, Heavy Equipment, Dental Careers, Nurse Assistant, Engineering Design and Architecture, Computer Networking, Hospitality, Automotive Technology, Aviation, and more.

Courses in CTE pathways are similar to other high school-level courses as they are grounded in standards that guide teaching and learning in the classroom. CTE courses, however, are more application-based. The pathways are typically two years long. For students seeking pathways that require certification to enter their chosen field, they provide the education necessary to sit for those certification exams.

We want our students to be college and career ready. CTE pathways fulfill this need for many of our students by providing engaging educational opportunities.

As you'll read below, our schools recently marked Red Ribbon Week. The Red Ribbon Campaign, established in 1988, has left a lasting impression worldwide. It all started with DEA Agent Enrique Camarena's tragic murder. Concerned parents and young people in communities all over the country began wearing Red Ribbons as a symbol of their dedication to increasing awareness about drugs' destructive effects in America. Nowadays, the Red Ribbon has become a driving force that mobilizes communities to educate young people. It promotes their involvement in activities aimed at preventing drug abuse. Since its inception, this campaign has reached millions of children and families across the United States.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue kindergarteners and first grade students hosted special guests from the Warwick Historical Society. Staff members from the historical society visited our kindergarten students with their Traveling Trunks. They talked to the children about U.S. symbols and shared wonderful artifacts, such as various flags that represent our flag's history and evolution. The first graders compared what a school experience is like in Warwick in the present vs. "a long time ago." Students learned about different aspects of a one room schoolhouse, how the schoolroom was heated, what the children ate for lunch, and how they practiced handwriting and math facts.

The fourth grade orchestra students in Keely Blaikner's class have mastered the idea of plucking the strings of their instruments, called pizzicato, to make sound. They learn how to use their bow. The students are moving on to the next phase of making proper sounds on their instruments by learning the bow hold and the bow arm motion. Students need time, practice and patience to master this critical technique, but they are always excited to move forward through this stage.

This year's Red Ribbon theme (Be Kind To Your Mind and Be Drug Free) reminded Americans across the country to make significant daily contributions to their communities by being the best they can be because they live drug free! The theme encouraged everyone to use their voice to make a difference no matter who they are, where they're from or what they do. The possibilities are endless when the community works together. Red Ribbon Week focused on being drug and alcohol free. Park students are young. Therefore, the school emphasizes respect for bodies and brains, healthy choices, and making positive contributions to our community.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville students and staff also participated in Red Ribbon Week. Each day there was a different message for the students surrounding the Be Kind To Your Mind and Be Drug Free theme: Respect our bodies and brains and make healthy choices; Be a good friend; Don't get mixed up with the wrong crowd; and Be like a superhero and take care of your body and mind; and Our future is bright and we've got the spirit to dream big! Our students showed how they participated in Red Ribbon Week by wearing red, wearing their crazy mixed up outfit, dressing up as their favorite Superhero, sporting bright socks to focus on positive choices for a positive future, and dressing in purple and gold or Sanfordville spirit clothing.

A free eye screening was provided by the Warwick Lions Club for kindergarten students. Sanfordville kindergarten students were invited to participate. We were happy to have our Lions Club provide this valuable screening for our families. Thank you to the Warwick Lions Club!

The PIE community gathered at the SES Peace Wall for the third annual Fall Fest. The night started with all PIE students performing fall songs they learned in class. They were accompanied by a PIE parent playing live guitar and pre-recorded music from their music teacher. After the show, students and families mingled, enjoyed light refreshments and took photos with fall-themed props. The event was decorated with scarecrows and crafts made by children. Families also donated canned food products to the local food pantry.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Eighth-grade historians recently embarked on an exciting journey into Colonial American history. Their mission? To delve deep into the lives of early American colonists, exploring how they harnessed the land and its resources. This was done to craft essential "products" and household items for their daily needs. After weeks of dedicated research, the students turned in their naturally crafted projects and supportive writing. This offered a glimpse into early Americans' resourcefulness. To conclude, they presented captivating presentations to their classmates.

Eighth-grade artists have been diligent in conjuring up their own spine-tingling magic. With creativity as their cauldron and ink and watercolor as their potions, they've set out on a mission to recreate iconic scary movie posters. This will send shivers down your spine. These young artists have mastered the art of suspense, carefully crafting each watercolor brushstroke to capture "horror" on their papers. Through their unique ink and watercolor technique, they breathe life into darkness, resulting in chilling and captivating masterpieces.

At the countywide Red Ribbon Week kick-off event at the High School, 25 exceptional students from the Middle School's SADD Club and Youth Coalition took center stage, promoting their commitment to a drug-free, healthy lifestyle.

Warwick Valley High School

The High School and Middle School, in collaboration with the Warwick Prevention Coalition, the Warwick Police Department and the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Council of Orange County hosted the countywide Red Ribbon Week Kick-off event. It was a remarkable morning filled with impactful activities and meaningful engagement. With the participation of close to 200 students from across the county, the event served as a powerful platform to raise awareness about the importance of living a drug-free and healthy lifestyle. The collaborative effort of multiple organizations underscored our community's commitment to promoting a drug-free environment, empowering our youth with the knowledge and tools they need to make responsible choices.

Throughout the event, various workshops were thoughtfully facilitated by our dedicated teachers. These workshops allowed students to explore pertinent topics related to substance abuse prevention and personal well-being. The collective effort showcased our community's strength in shaping a brighter future for our youth. This Red Ribbon Week Kick-off event not only fostered education and awareness but also exemplified our community's unity in creating a safe and healthy environment for our students.