

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
November 22, 2023

As we gather around our tables this Thanksgiving, I wanted to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone in our school district and the entire Warwick community.

Our incredible educators and staff bring leadership and creativity to our schools. Their passion for education and commitment to our students inspire us all. To our students, you have shown remarkable skills and abilities so far this school year. I am eager to see what everyone accomplishes as the year progresses. To our parents and guardians, your unwavering trust in our team is the foundation on which we build our shared success. To our community, your support for our schools is unmatched. Go Wildcats!

I wish you all a happy and healthy Thanksgiving. As we adults prepare for Thanksgiving, so have our elementary school students.

At Park Avenue Elementary School, our students needed to answer a tough question, “What qualities do you have that you are thankful for?” Mrs. Canfield’s kindergarteners and Ms. Weller’s third graders discussed this question during Kinder Buddies. Students were challenged to think beyond their tangible possessions and dwell on more meaningful things that should make them grateful. Together the buddies brainstormed and created art and writing pieces to respond to the prompt.

Mrs. Overbey, her students and their classroom aides at Sanfordville Elementary School planned, prepared, served, and enjoyed a Friendsgiving feast in their classroom. Mrs. Overbey integrated student learning in all content areas over the past two weeks. This planning included lessons on the first Thanksgiving, and students writing about being thankful for their blessings. They discussed family traditions and celebrations as they planned their own classroom celebration. Students presented hand-written invitations to teachers, service providers, secretaries, and Principal Johnna Maraia. Students learned to read recipes, measure ingredients, and more. Everyone sat together to eat turkey, delicious side dishes, apple cider and desserts. The students enjoyed the results of their dedicated work and showed how truly thankful they are for their friends.

Sanfordville students and staff continued to show how thankful they were during the holiday season by participating in the Warwick Food Pantry. This effort helped ensure that food pantry clients had the basics for a holiday meal this holiday season. Each day, students and staff brought items for food pantry donations. Thank you to everyone who participated. Three car loads of items were dropped off at the pantry.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

The Park Ave Lego League Jr. team has met twice so far and is already busy at work. This year's Lego League team members are third graders Ewa Mazurek, Logan Reilly, and Gavin Martin and fourth graders Carmine Mele, Mateo Rodriguez, and Gianna Dunado. The group started their first morning together by getting to know each other and creating Lego builds that represent one of their personal hobbies. The second session was spent working together on a collaborative build of a rotating stage. This fits this year's theme of "Masterpiece." The team rotated through different roles such as 'instruction describer,' 'builder,' and 'piece finders.' Next, the team will explore distinct roles involved with putting on a performance. This work will align perfectly with the Park Ave Drama Club performances this week! Club Advisor Mrs. Cangialosi said, "We will discuss the endless connections between the performance and this year's Lego League theme."

The Park Avenue Student Council headed over to the Orange County Veterans Cemetery in Goshen to decorate trees before the holidays. The Student Council helped create and organize hundreds of memorial ornaments recognizing those who served and are no longer with us. This is just one activity related to the Student Council's overall commitment to honoring our veterans.

Sanfordville Elementary School

The Partners in Education (P.I.E.) classes held their Harvest Feast, a celebration created by students, staff, and parent volunteers, using materials cultivated from the PIE garden! All eight classes helped create a snack or meal item. There was applesauce from kindergarten classes and tomato sauce made from tomatoes grown and picked in the PIE garden by the first and second grade classes. First and second grade students also took the pumpkins they grew in the garden and made pumpkin muffins. Third and fourth graders used the squash they grew to make squash soup and squash succotash. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a successful event!

Any families interested in learning more about the PIE Program at Sanfordville are invited to our PIE Informational Night. Please join the PIE teachers, school administrators, and PIE community members on December 6, 2023 at 6 p.m. in the school cafeteria. You will learn more about PIE's four cornerstones: Multi-age Classes, Parent Involvement, Integrated Curriculum, and Nature Appreciation. Any questions can be directed to the SES main office.

Warwick Valley Middle School

The Middle School hosted its first Student of the Month recognition breakfast of the year. Many teachers arrived early to see their nominees' smiles, and our cafeteria was overflowing with families. Parents and students alike acknowledged the outstanding achievements of our September and October nominees. These nominees were all exceptional students who were singled out for their commendable embodiment of the characteristics outlined in our district's Portrait of a Graduate.

The honorees were chosen for their exemplary demonstration of the skills and attributes outlined in our Portrait of a Graduate. The event underscored the school's commitment to nurturing academic proficiency, but also a positive and enriching environment that encourages personal growth. The Middle School continues to reinforce the importance of a collaborative partnership between educators and families in shaping its students' educational journey.

We look forward to continuing this celebration throughout the school year. Our next breakfast will be in January, to recognize our November and December nominees.

Warwick Valley High School

The WVHS Interact Club and participants of the 2023 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) joined Warwick's weekly Rotary Club meeting. The gathering was an excellent opportunity for students and community members to come together in the spirit of collaboration. It also allowed them to discuss ongoing projects aimed at benefiting the local community.

Led by faculty advisor Jeanine Fogler, the Interact Club's 100-plus student members develop leadership skills by embracing Service Above Self. The club undertakes at least two impactful projects every year – one focused on supporting the school or local community, and another geared towards fostering international understanding. Warwick's Rotary Club plays a pivotal role in sponsoring, mentoring and guiding the Interact Club in carrying out these initiatives. Notably, Interact members recently organized a successful food drive at the high school. This collected enough donations to feed 75 families during Thanksgiving.

In addition to the Interact program, students who participated in RYLA shared their transformative experiences at the Rotary meeting. Having spent a week at Mount Saint Mary College, connecting with peers from diverse Orange County schools, these students highlighted how RYLA had been a catalyst for personal growth. They expressed how the program instilled confidence, equipping them to conquer any challenge that comes their way.