

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**November 29, 2023**

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Students thrive in the performing arts at Warwick Valley Central School District! We create every opportunity for our performers to display their creativity and determination for the community at large. We are always proud to watch them share their incredible performances and see the astonishment on the audience's faces. I invite you to set calendar updates so you can join us for some of the most eagerly anticipated evenings of our Performing Arts calendar – The WVCSD Winter Concert Series!

The 2023 WVCSD Winter Concert Series includes seven performances over five nights. The performances highlight our students' incredible creativity, talent, and determination. You feel the dedication to, and enthusiasm for, their art that we see these students demonstrate every day. This series, to me, is one of the strongest testaments to our district's commitment to artistic excellence.

**All concerts will be held in the WVHS Auditorium. The Winter Concert Series schedule is:**

- WVHS Winter Orchestra Concert  
Tuesday, December 5  
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
(Snow Date: 12/6/23)
- WVHS Winter Chorus Concert  
Thursday, December 7  
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
(Snow Date: 12/11/23)
- WVHS Winter Band Concert  
Tuesday, December 12  
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
(Snow Date: 12/13/23)
- WVMS 7th Grade Winter Concert  
Monday, December 18  
6:30 p.m. – 7:20 p.m.  
(Snow Date: 12/20/23)
- WVMS 8th Grade Winter Concert  
Monday, December 18  
7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
(Snow Date: 12/20/23)
- WVMS 5th Grade Winter Concert  
Tuesday, December 19

6:30 pm – 7:20 pm  
(Snow Date: 12/20/23)

- WVMS 6th Grade Winter Concert  
Tuesday, December 19  
7:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
(Snow Date: 12/20/23)

My sincerest gratitude to the exceptional Warwick Valley Music Department faculty, whose unwavering commitment nurtures our students' musical talents. Together, they have built a program that does everything a program could do to educate, encourage and empower students to find inspiration, engagement and fulfillment through the arts. Thank you to our high school teachers, Noreen Hanson, Elissa Maynard and Megan Shafer. Thank you to our middle school teachers, Christy Brown, Ashley Head, Tamara Moser, Shane Peters and Peter VanDeWater. I extend our heartfelt appreciation to the educators, Keely Blaikner, Katlyn Chester, Alison Echevarria, and Ryan Muehlbauer. Their work laid the groundwork for early learning in elementary schools, enabling our students to succeed today and in the future.

It has already been a pleasure highlighting the achievements of Warwick Valley musicians this year, including Conner Price, Kayla Ludovicy, Ben Poka, and Zoe Link, who were selected for the 2023 NYSSMA All-State Winter Conference ensembles. Being selected is a prestigious honor reserved for musicians who achieve a perfect score on their prepared, adjudicated NYSSMA solos. We also celebrated 30 Warwick Valley musicians for making the Hudson Valley Honors Ensembles, a program sponsored by Syracuse University. The WVHS and WVMS musicians passed a rigorous audition process to perform in the HV Honors Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, Concert Band and Sixth Grade Band.

This month, we are thrilled to celebrate the remarkable achievement of 14 talented musicians from WVHS who had the honor of participating in the 2023 NYSSMA Area All-State Festival. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Michael Kelly, Lauren Ellis, Lena Jodry, Olivia Holland, Josh Cornelius, Talia Hertigan, Lionel Wolfe, Abigail Gatdula, Benjamin Poka, Emily Bujosa, Abigail Yurchuck, Phoebe Paddock, Zoe Link, and Nathan Link for their outstanding accomplishments! These exceptional students were chosen from a pool of over 2,000 auditions and had the privilege of showcasing their musical talents in various ensembles, including the Mixed Chorus, Symphonic Band, Treble Chorus, and Orchestra.

*Here are some highlights from our schools this week:*

**Park Avenue Elementary School**

Park Avenue Drama Club presented Willy Wonka Kids to three sold-out audiences! A total of 75

third and fourth grade students performed their hearts out, singing and dancing across the stage, and giving incredible performances. We even had a special appearance from our Principal Bill Biniaris (aka Wonka Vision Camera Man). Thank you to Director Christy Brown, Producer Amy Buliung, Costume and Set Designer Lisa Martimucci, and Vocal Director Carolyn Weller for all of the dedicated work helping these students shine! The creative team would like to acknowledge all of the Warwick Valley High School and Warwick Valley Middle School student helpers who dedicated hours to helping week after week at rehearsals and with special projects. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the parents, grandparents, sisters, and brothers who dedicated hours to chaperoning, painting backdrops, building sets, and creating costumes, which truly made the show.

The Park Avenue Student Council has continued its work honoring our veterans. They have been busy collecting pictures of veterans who are no longer with us and creating ornaments for them all. Student Council members, Park Avenue families, teachers, staff, and others decorated trees at the entrance to the Orange County Veterans Cemetery in Goshen. In total, they hung over 300 ornaments for the holidays.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Mrs. Havell's kindergarten class at Sanfordville Elementary learned about veterans and Veterans Day. They read a book called "Veterans, Heroes in our Neighborhood" by Valerie Pfundstein. After reading, the class talked about different people in our neighborhoods. The class then made a thank you craft for Mrs. Havell's husband, Master Sgt. Douglas Havell who serves in the 105th Air Wing at Stewart Air Guard in Newburgh. He hung up the thank you cards made by Mrs. Havell's students in the 105th Air Wing's breakroom for all veterans and active military personnel to enjoy.

The first graders visited the Warwick Historical Society for a Traveling Trunks presentation. Students learned what Warwick schools were like over a hundred years ago. The students saw real artifacts of schools and learned about a one-room schoolhouse. We thank the volunteer teachers from the Historical Society for all the interesting information they shared with our students.

After reading the book, "Balloons Over Broadway," by Melissa Sweet, our first-grade students designed their own balloon creations. In the book, students were introduced to master puppeteer, Tony Sarg, who invented the first balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. A puppeteer's childhood inventions of these giant balloons floating in the sky inspired our students to create their own. To celebrate their work all of the first grade classes marched through Sanfordville halls flying their "balloons" high!

Any families interested in learning more about the Partners in Education (PIE) Program at Sanfordville are invited to 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 the four cornerstones of PIE: Multi-age classes, parent involvement, integrated curriculum, and nature appreciation. Any questions can be directed to the SES main office.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

There was an exciting collaboration between middle school students and the high school video production program. They joined forces to record the first newscast of the new marking period. The eager middle schoolers seamlessly integrated with their high school counterparts. This formed a vibrant team that brought a fresh perspective to news production. Students in grades 5-8 each spoke about various aspects of middle school programming that occurred from September to November.

This collaboration serves as a bridge between education levels, creating an invaluable mentorship opportunity for both groups. The resulting newscast reflected the diversity of ideas and talents brought together, showcasing the collaborative spirit that defines our educational community. This inter-school partnership not only enhanced the students' media skills but also fostered a sense of unity and shared accomplishment, setting the stage for future collaborative endeavors that promise to further enrich the educational experience for all involved. We look forward to seeing the final product of our newest newscasters.

Brynn Hasbrouck reported on the Harlem Wizards' upcoming game. George Bukovsky spoke about our Student of the Month Celebration. Shea Marshall recapped the first marking period at middle school. Jake Hernandez gave the modified fall sports update, and Connor Brogan gave an update on the SADD club and Red Ribbon Week.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

In a momentous occasion for Warwick Valley High School's senior athletes, we are proud to share that four of our graduating seniors have signed letters of intent with Division 1 universities. John Accardo will play lacrosse for the Siena Saints at Siena College in Loudonville, N.Y. Lily Beattie will compete in track and field at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi. Sierra Blanton will compete in lacrosse at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Francis Keneally will play lacrosse at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

These high-achieving seniors, recognized for their exceptional skills and dedication, are set to continue their athletic journeys while pursuing their college degree. The signings underscore the remarkable talent within Warwick Valley High School's sports program. They also represent a significant milestone for graduating seniors as they prepare to embark on this next chapter in their academic and athletic careers. We are beyond thrilled to witness these students take their talents to the collegiate level. Their achievements are a testament to the commitment to excellence instilled in our school's culture.

