

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
November 8, 2023

Winter may be more than a few weeks away. However, each fall we like to review some of the Warwick Valley Central School District's communications procedures related to delays, early dismissals and closures caused by inclement weather. Winter is approaching, and we should be prepared for the unpredictable nature of Mother Nature. She can throw us some curveballs, so having contingency plans in place for early dismissals or unexpected weather events is paramount.

In cases where icy winter weather is imminent, we may close schools the night before for the following day. More often, however, we wait until the morning, keeping a close eye on local conditions and forecasts. This approach is to reach the most informed decision possible and ensure our students' safety. We make every effort to inform you about delays and closures by 5:30 a.m. before parents and guardians have to leave for work or other obligations.

During the winter months, when inclement weather and poor road conditions are much more common, our school buses transport children across a service area covering more than 60 square miles. And, we have many student drivers. These adverse conditions can test our ability to safely navigate challenging terrain. Safety is always a priority. I make decisions about school closures or delays about ten times a year. The process involves monitoring weather forecasts in advance, collaborating with the transportation supervisor who begins work at 4 a.m., reaching fellow superintendents for input, and coordinating efforts with our buildings and grounds staff. Additionally, I would also contact the highway department to ascertain plowing schedules and estimated road clearance times. We would also travel the roads ourselves at times.

When the decision is made to delay, close, or dismiss school early, we have established a number of ways to ensure the related announcements get to you in a timely fashion.

1. School Messenger Service (SMS)

SMS is a primary method of contact for important school-related communications, and especially for weather related alerts. SMS messages arrive as texts, emails, and robocalls. The system was tested on November 1 to ensure that school emails/alerts are currently reaching all constituents with a WVCSD email.

2. Social Media (Facebook.com/WVCSD)

School closing, delay, and early dismissal messages will be posted to the district's Facebook page as soon as possible following delivery via SMS.

3. Radio & Television

We share our latest weather-related decisions with local and regional stations, including:

TV: WABC-TV; WNBC-TV; FOX 5; Hudson Valley News 12

Radio: 93.5 WTBQ; 92.1 Lite FM; 92.7; 96.9 WRRV; Star 93.3; 94.1, 95.7, 96.7, 103.1, 107.7 The Fox; 94.3; 97.3 The Wolf; 96.1 KISS FM; MIX 97.7; 98.9 Fox Oldies; News Talk 99.3 WKIP; 100.7 WHUD; 101.5 WPDH; 107.3; 1110 AM WTBQ; 1220 AM Fox Oldies; 1340 AM; 1390 AM Radio Disney; 1450 AM WKIP

Please do not contact our Transportation Department or bus garage for information on delays, closures, or early dismissals. Although we understand the impulse, it is critical that these phone lines remain open for emergencies, especially on inclement weather days. However, we always post announcements on the main webpage and social media.

To learn about the many factors that go into a decision to close our schools, I hope you will visit this page on our district website www.warwickvalleyschools.com/about-wvcisd/emergency-closings-delays. This page will give you important insight into the comprehensive decision-making process our administrative team goes through when deciding to open or close schools.

As a final note, in the event of an early dismissal, high school and middle school students are released first, and elementary students are dismissed approximately an hour later. This is to make sure that older siblings arrive home before their younger brothers and sisters. For the bell schedule on days when we have one- or two-hour delays, please visit the dedicated webpage for your child's school.

We are looking forward to a wonderful winter of learning here in Warwick, and the safety of our students is always our biggest concern.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

The Park Avenue PTA hosted another fun-filled Halloween Happenings event. Students, staff, and volunteers were full of Halloween spirit as they played in a gym transformed by fun filled activities. The grand-slam part of the event was the Haunted House organized and staffed by parent volunteers. You could hear the children's excitement as they exited the stage ready to return for more!

This week, the entire student body will gather in the gym to honor visiting veterans. The fourth grade Student Council has organized a wonderful event that includes a U.S. Marine Corp Color Guard joining us for the presentation of colors. In addition, there is the HS Wire Choir directed by Elissa Maynard. Lastly, Katlyn Chester will direct students as they sing *This Land is Your Land* for guests. Congratulations to Student Council Club Advisors Amy Buliung and Theresa Canfield. Thank you!

Media Specialist Matthew Spicehandler "spiced" things up in the library by hosting a *Spooky Story Time*. Students celebrated this spooky season by reading works by authors such as Chris Van Allsburg and R.L. Stine, author of the Goosebumps series. Mr. Spicehandler decorated the library with cool lights and other items to transform the space in a fun way for children.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville was transformed into a haunted pirate ship for a Halloween celebration. The halls were crawling with creepy and spooky skeletons, aliens, super heroes, pirates and more! Students experienced a parachute game, voted for their favorite decorated pumpkins, designed their own pirate hats, and experienced a pirate ship in the middle of the gym. They also experienced a "haunted" maze. After the maze, the students had to walk the plank across shark-infested waters. For the lucky ones that made it safely across the waters, the next obstacle pirates faced was to zig-zag through a coral reef and then participate in a cannon ball toss. Students' outdoor experience culminated with digging for treasure. All of this could not have been possible without the tremendous support of the Sanfordville PTA and all of our parent volunteers. They helped to set up the experiences, run the stations, and clean up at the end of the day.

May the force be with you is what occupational therapy/physical education staff members said on Halloween. They certainly were a force to be reckoned with as they were announced as the winners of the faculty and staff Halloween costume contest. The faculty and staff raised \$370 to donate to the winning team's charity of choice. The Star Wars crew donated \$370 to Beautiful People.

The PTA, Leadership Club, teachers and families supported the Beautiful People Run/Walk/Roll. Besides participating in the event and making donations, SES sponsored and manned a water and lemonade table for the participants during the event.

Warwick Valley Middle School

On an exciting journey through land formations, Lenora Shook's sixth grade science classes embarked on an educational adventure that was as immersive as it was informative. At the heart of this captivating learning experience was an engaging activity focused on erosion and

deposition. At various stations, students encountered intricate clay structures designed to mirror land formations. Their challenge was to identify these formations and distinguish between erosion and deposition. Students collaborated as teams, putting their knowledge and observation skills to the test using descriptive cards. This hands-on approach not only made learning fun but also ensured a deeper understanding of natural processes that shape our planet.

For Halloween, the middle school transformed into a spooktacular wonderland for this year's celebrations. Costumes ranged from cute and creative to downright eerie, and the students and staff stole the spotlight during this hair-raising day.

Some ELA classes had pumpkin-related activities and writings, while art classes created scary Halloween watercolor posters. Math classes engaged in algebraic lessons using candy, while many science classes looked at candy makeup. At the end of the day the staff had their annual costume contest. The Beta Team won for their Guardians of The Galaxy themed costumes, featuring a nearly 7-foot tall Groot, played by Mr. Ronzoni.

Warwick Valley High School

The Portfolio and Set Design classes dazzled at Crystal Springs Resort's Annual Great Jack O'Lantern Competition, held at the Grand Cascade Resort. Their theme, inspired by the Ghostbusters film, brought forth a captivating display complete with interactive props that brought the pumpkins to life. A towering 10-foot tall Stay Puft marshmallow man presided over the scene, while Egon and Peter navigated the eerie landscape in the iconic Ecto-1. Slimer was electrified by a cardboard proton pack constructed of cardboard and complete with LED lights. The "terror" dogs watched over this scene, as ghosts invaded New York City.

Despite stiff competition, Kristen Spano and Rocco Manno's students emerged triumphant, claiming the esteemed "Grand Prize" of \$1,000. This generous reward will fund art scholarships for Warwick Valley High School's budding artists, opening doors and opportunities for creative expression and growth. This victory not only celebrated the students' boundless talent, but also underscored the transformative power of art within the community.