

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
December 13, 2023

The Warwick Valley Central School District provides students with a challenging and meaningful education. We recognize that students learn differently. Our staff are encouraged to be lifelong learners and aware of each child's unique learning style. The district offers in-service and professional development, including a formal mentoring and internship program. Implementing an educational program involves a variety of instructional strategies and practices. Parent visitors may see team teaching, peer tutoring, and differentiated instruction in action in a classroom.

We regularly review our New York State Standards-based curriculum at the elementary level to ensure it emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective study habits. Elementary schools teach the arts, music, physical education, health, and library/research skills. Additionally, students can join clubs and sports teams. Warwick's students frequently outperform our region's schools on traditional measures. We also have a highly regarded K-12 music program, with band and strings beginning in grade 4.

Warwick Valley Middle School (WVMS) has about 1,100 students. The schedules of fifth- and sixth-graders rotate to offer academic blocks. Like high school students, seventh and eighth-graders follow a rotating block schedule. Each student is assigned to a team so the school retains its small-school feel. Honors courses start in seventh grade in English, math, science, and social studies. There are three foreign language options: French, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, intramurals, and sports. WVMS also has a student senate, a drama club, a band, a chorus, and an orchestra.

Our high school students consistently score higher on standardized tests than their county, state, and national peers. They are offered Advanced Placement and college classes through SUNY Orange, SUNY Albany, and Mount Saint Mary College. Ninety-three percent of our graduates continue their formal education after graduation. Warwick Valley High School (WVHS) students can also choose from dozens of clubs and varsity athletic teams as part of their well-rounded educational options. Also available to WVHS students are technical and occupational career programs. Similarly to elementary schools, middle and high schools stage musicals and plays each year.

The district offers honors classes in English (8-12), Social Studies (8-12), Science (8-12), Math (7-12), and foreign languages (9-12). Middle school honors programs begin, and acceptance is determined by grades, assessments, and universal screening results. Honors in high school requires passing grades in every marking period and/or a final grade of 85 percent or above. For

more information about your child's enrollment in the Honors Program, contact the guidance office at his or her middle or high school.

The district continues to implement a balanced assessment system throughout its schools that accurately reflects student progress. In addition to monitoring student progress, WVCSD recognizes that it's imperative to maximize instructional time. This focus aims to replace more traditional assessment practices with performance-based assessments that benefit students.

The school district publishes its school district report card and accountability reports. Please visit our website to view our information archive.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue's newspaper club, The Paw Print, hosted Lisa Reider, managing editor of The Warwick Advertiser. Ms. Reider generously came to our meeting Thursday morning and talked to the members about working at the newspaper. She performed the different tasks involved in the job.

She also gave the students some tips on what to include in our newspaper. For example, she suggested including more visual elements for the younger grades as well as a "current events" section. This is where we pose two or three quick questions to faculty and students in the hallway. She asked our students some questions while our students asked questions as well. It was a very rich and engaging conversation and opportunity for The Paw Print team.

Park Avenue's Student Council spearheaded this year's Toys for Military Tots effort. Our student leaders chose a goal of 300 toys to send to the WTbQ radio station. As a result of meeting with Taylor Sterling and me, they decided to move forward with the project. The students exceeded the goal with 306 toys collected!

Sanfordville Elementary School

Parents and families are invited to share family traditions with the first grade classes. This focus is to enhance and support our Social Studies Unit on Family and Cultural Identity. Teachers have begun to read extensive literature to support this unit. What an excellent way for our students to grow as life-long learners.

In social studies, fourth-grade students did a gallery walk to introduce Native Americans. Students pretended to be archaeologists and observed various artifacts to problem solve what they thought they were. They also observed what they were used for, what they were made from,

and what the artifact tells about people and the environment. Students wrote their answers on post-its. The next day, they concluded about the artifacts and people.

Sanfordville Leadership Club rallied the students and staff to donate close to 200 gifts of toys, books, and crafts to "Toys for Military Tots." Sanfordville, along with the other schools in our district partnered with WTBQ Radio and County Executive Neuhaus to collect new, unwrapped toys for the children of our Orange County military and veterans.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Both the musical and visual arts create a strong foundation for creativity and problem solving for our students. In our sixth-grade art classes, students have been enthusiastically diving into coil pot building. Students have been exploring hand-building pottery fundamentals, and they've learned coil pottery technique. With hands immersed in clay, our students have been skillfully rolling coils, meticulously stacking them to shape the foundation, walls, and unique style of their pots. Guided by the ancient art of coil pottery, the students have discovered the transformative power of molding clay into expressive, functional pieces. As they press, mold, and refine each coil, craftsmanship and creativity unfolds. This fosters both artistic ability and a profound connection to pottery's rich tradition.

In Ms. Brown's general music classes, a harmonious journey through musical history unfolds. Recently, her students have been immersed in the exploration of various musical eras, with a spotlight on the dynamic rock & roll era. Students dive into rhythmic percussion. Ms. Brown provided hands-on experiences, introducing drum set components and guiding her students through drum basics. The classroom echoed with drum beats as the students embraced the opportunity to practice and play on actual drum sets. This approach unlocks the infectious rhythm characteristic of the rock & roll era. Through this immersive experience, Ms. Brown's students acquire musical knowledge and foster a profound appreciation for music history.

Warwick Valley High School

During December, the Warwick Valley Treble Choir and Warwick Valley Meistersingers experienced a truly extraordinary moment in their musical journey. This was as they took center stage at Radio City Music Hall. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity saw the talented choir opening for the world-renowned Radio City Rockettes, adding an extra layer of prestige and excitement to their performance. Radio City Music Hall provided a breathtaking backdrop for their voices to resonate, creating an unforgettable experience for both performers and audience.