

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**December 20, 2023**

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This time of year provides us with a precious opportunity to reflect on the importance of family, friends and the shared moments that make our community so vibrant. That is why I want to express our deepest gratitude to our school families and Warwick neighbors. Their strong support of our schools enables us to provide exceptional educational opportunities for our students.

When it comes to questions such as whether great schools create great communities or great communities create great schools, it's akin to a "chicken or the egg" argument. However, there can be no doubt that by working together, we have both. As superintendent of the Warwick Valley Central School District, I am particularly grateful for the collaboration and partnership we enjoy with such a great community.

The commitment and generosity that Warwick residents exhibit in support of their schools are -- and will always be -- invaluable in creating an environment where learning flourishes and futures are shaped with purpose and promise. Most importantly, that ongoing support enriches our students' lives and prepares them for further discovery and fulfillment down the road. Additionally, it strengthens the unique bonds between classroom and community that make Warwick a truly special place to live and learn.

The journey of education is a shared adventure, and I am grateful that our administration, faculty, staff and students are on that journey with such an engaged, enthusiastic and encouraging public. Looking ahead to the New Year, I am excited about the opportunities for our students. I am also excited about the winter and spring events – such as sporting events, plays and concerts, breakfasts, award banquets – that bring us all together.

Already, I'm eagerly anticipating the unfolding of the next chapters, new discoveries, and celebrating more exciting and inspiring student successes in the coming months. But first, as we gather in the spirit of the season these next couple of weeks, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. I wish you a restful holiday break, joyful celebrations, and a New Year filled with health and happiness.

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

**Park Avenue Elementary School**

Students in the fourth grade band are busy preparing “Jingle Bells” for their first mini-performance next week. They are excited to share the progress they have made during the first

few months of school. This week's lesson focused on CONFIDENCE. Students discussed various ways to demonstrate confidence when performing music in front of a crowd. It was indeed an insightful lesson. Students' resilience is strengthened; it takes confidence and resilience to perform music in front of an audience. Students learn strategies to make the experience smooth and enjoyable, both for the audience and themselves.

Park Avenue's Student Council visited the Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Goshen. They witnessed the Wreaths Across America parade on its way to the cemetery. This year our amazing student council, led by Amy Buliung and Theresa Canfield, exceeded their fundraising goal by raising more than \$3,600 to purchase wreaths for our veterans!

In art class, our kindergarten students started their multimedia collage project. They will create winter penguins using multiple artmaking techniques. Their first step was to employ a printmaking method to create a wintery themed background for the penguins. They used paint, tinfoil, and Q-tips to make a monoprint, which is a form of printmaking that produces one unique print. Next time they will use multiple sheets of colored construction paper to make a penguin collage.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

The Partners in Education 3/4 classes had been diligently creating exhibit pieces for their living museum. Students created Iroquois artifacts and wrote scripts, so they could be well-informed tour guides for their visitors. Some of our students actually got into character and played the Iroquois. The student exhibits included longhouses, dream catchers, wampum belts, traditional Iroquois food, clothing, games, and explanations of how the government worked.

Our kindergarten and first grade students were treated to a Polar Express visit. Conductor John, our SES parent volunteer, read the classic book *Polar Express* to our students after they received a special golden ticket and magical bell! Students listened intently to his animated story version. Thank you Conductor John for spending the morning with us!

Ms. Lindberg's Kindergarten class has been reading and listening to stories about winter, holidays and traditions around the world. They read the story *Snowmen at Night* and discussed the different types of things they imagine snowmen could do when nobody is awake at night. As a follow-up activity, they used chalk to draw a snowman on blue construction paper. They added detail based on what we thought our snowman would do at night.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

In our eighth grade social studies classes students learn about Jacob Riis' photojournalistic skills. Riis was one of the first to use flash photography to capture tenement housing and other urban areas. This helped to bring attention to social issues of the time. Riis is remembered for his

pioneering efforts in photojournalism and societal reform. He shed light on the living conditions of the urban poor and inspired a change in societal attitudes towards poverty and housing. Students have compared and contrasted the lives of children in the 1920s to the 2020s. They have been analyzing the impact of the internet and social media on their lives today. They have been engaging in activities to provoke their thinking about how life would have changed with today's technologies 100 years ago.

Our students learn in many different ways at middle school. One of those ways is through extracurricular activities and athletics. Our new club at the middle school was born of Mr. Bott and Mr. Patafio's vision to teach our students about financial literacy and thus the Stocks Club was born. The club aims to introduce the stock market to students. World-renowned investor Warren Buffett began investing at 11 (and regretted not starting sooner). Mr. Botta and Mr. Patafio want to introduce students to the S&P 500, break down its past, and analyze its long-term trends. They want students to realize the market risk but also realize its historical successes. This new club has over 60 members and high aspirations. The club is highly interested in a professional guided Wall Street tour this year. It hopes to ring the bell on the stock exchange floor in the next five years.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

For the past 15 years, Warwick Valley High School has proudly upheld a cherished tradition that celebrates the culmination of work, creativity, and dedication – The Senior Project. Senior project students, brimming with enthusiasm, shared their projects with an engaged audience of family, classmates and esteemed guests. The atmosphere in the room was electric as each student presented their unique projects spanning a wide array of topics and disciplines. From innovative technological solutions to heartfelt community initiatives, the diverse array of projects showcased students' ingenuity and depth of academic and personal growth.

Added to the excitement of the occasion, the event featured a special guest speaker – Warwick graduate and sports radio personality, Damon Amendolara. His inspiring words resonated with the students, offering insights into real-world applications of passion, perseverance, and pursuit of dreams. As applause echoed through the room, anticipation grew for the next chapter in this time-honored tradition. The students are eagerly awaiting the adjudication process scheduled for June. In this process, they will have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, articulate the lessons learned, and gain valuable insights into their personal and academic development. This tradition serves as a testament to the school's commitment to holistic education. It also marks a pivotal moment in the students' educational journey. This prepares them for the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead in their future endeavors.