

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
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**Our Elementary Schools: Reflecting on Achievements, Highlights & Aspirations**

Our principals and associate principals gave a comprehensive overview of our faculty, staff and students' newest accomplishments during our December 14 board meeting. They discussed areas of pride, highlighting recent highlights and outlining some of our aspirations for 2024. Their sharing shed light on our entire school community's dedication to and passion for education, and their outstanding teamwork. In this article, I take immense pride in focusing on Park Avenue Elementary School (PES) and Sanfordville Elementary School (SES), and the extraordinary level of collaboration and collegiality that permeates our elementary culture.

Among the inspiring initiatives orchestrated by our elementary educators is their coordination of character education lessons. It has been a truly remarkable combined effort, as they have worked hand in hand with our guidance counselors, psychologists and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team on these programs. They have also organized seamless school-wide assemblies and poster contests aimed at promoting our shared school-wide expectations related to behaviors, emotions and decision-making.

This includes the efforts of even our newest teachers! We have welcomed more than 30 new teachers in the past three years, all of whom have embraced our shared aspirations for every Warwick student, our *Portrait of a Graduate*. They are passionate educators who have collaborated closely with our PBIS teams, launched our exciting new school newspaper, *The Paw Print*, and supported Drama Clubs, Leadership Clubs, and Student Councils.

On a side note, I would like to recognize our new teachers for taking such active roles in newly hired teacher meetings and always being willing to present at our PTA events. The strong support and active involvement of our elementary Parent Teacher Associations has always played a pivotal role in creating the nurturing and supportive environment at Warwick schools, and having so much communication between both groups strengthens our whole educational ecosystem.

This year, we have witnessed numerous heartwarming examples that beautifully illustrate how teachers, staff, and parents from both PES and SES come together wholeheartedly to uplift and support our students. There was the heartwarming sight of a parent dressed up as our school mascot, and the generous financial support for laminated posters. PTA energy also fueled our recent SES end-of-trimester celebration, the culmination of which was a spectacular celebration featuring a dazzling laser light show and the exhilarating MindStorm Game Show!

A recent example of PES and SES students exemplifying what it means to be *Global & Ethical Citizens* was their participation in this year's WTBQ Radio Toys for Military Tots campaign. The SES Leadership Club and PES Student Council embraced the toy drive challenge with

excitement, demonstrating exceptional empathy, compassion and respect for others by helping collect more than 1,000 toys district-wide. The campaign exceeded 5,000 toys in total!

Students at both schools have taken the initiative to care for the community in a number of ways. SES held a very successful Food Pantry Drive, with students and families contributing hundreds of food items to the Ecumenical Society to distribute to families in need during the holiday season. The PES Student Council collected more than \$3,600 to purchase wreaths for the Wreaths Across America campaign, and then placed those wreaths on the graves of Veterans at Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Goshen. In November, the students also handcrafted 300+ ornaments, which they hung on trees at the entrance to the cemetery.

Reflecting on achievements like these and appreciating the outstanding camaraderie within our school community, we find ourselves looking eagerly ahead to 2024. One area that is of particular note are the Multi-tiered Support Systems and Instructional Support Teams we have in place, and which are at the core of our educational journey. These involve the analysis of student data and the collective efforts of a rich tapestry of perspectives that each team member brings to the table, including teachers, counselors, psychologists and administrators.

To provide a tangible example of how this plays out in the school setting, consider one of our elementary grade-level teacher team meetings. During such meetings, we thoroughly examine the results of recent student assessments. Teachers identify the "power standards" (or essential learning targets) that each assessment was designed to measure. We celebrate student achievements by discussing areas in which they excelled, and we identify instructional strategies that proved effective in their success. In addition, we gain invaluable information on deficiencies, which guide our teaching strategies and allow us to tailor an approach that best serves the individual student.

Special attention is given to elementary students who have not yet mastered essential standards, and plans are designed to build up their unlearned skills. Progress is monitored and support is given to extend and enrich their learning experience and ensure they continue to thrive and reach new heights. Finally, we engage in a reflective exercise to consider whether any adjustments or enhancements are required to the assessments themselves. The goal is always to be improving and refining our tools so they are better at meeting our instructional objectives.

I could not be more proud of how our teacher teams work in such close partnership to evaluate student work, and I want to point out just how beneficial it is for our students to have peers providing one another such critical feedback. In summary, our recent accomplishments at the elementary level and our tireless dedication to a culture of academic excellence, have laid a strong foundation for continued growth in 2024.